

The following articles are from the 1996 edition of Transactions of the Alveley Historical Society

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WELCOME.

This is the second Transactions to be published by the Alveley Historical Society Research Group and we hope it will be received by our readers as well as our first volume which has been reprinted several times. The number of people buying our report shows the keen interest of Alveley people in the history of their parish. Our year was mainly focussed towards a weekend in August when we held an open evening to display much of our historical material and hosted an Alveley Day for the Shropshire Archaeological Society. That weekend proved a huge success. The evening display attracted over two hundred people who were astounded by the amount and scope of the material that we have in our archive. People came to the display from all around the Midlands area to see the display and talk with old Alveley friends. We were delighted to answer queries and also hear more about the various items in the display from our knowledgeable visitors. The Shropshire Archaeological Society were entertained with three talks and presentations about the parish, the mine and railway, and the Bell Stones. They also had a look around the display, a visit to the church and a tour around the Bell. In the last year we have consolidated a lot of the work we started in 1995. Our research projects have continued and the results are presented in this volume.

Alveley 1932

During our preparation for the exhibition at the Bell Inn I had the opportunity of meeting many local people who had spent all, or most, of their lives in the village. One newspaper cutting dated 29th August 1932 was loaned to me by Jack Jennings. It is well worth reprinting the article as it gives a clear description of how village life was 64 years ago.

The Village with No Unemployment - Alveley, the Jekyll and Hyde of Shropshire, by Quaestor

A pretty Shropshire village right off the main road looks for all the world as though it is being invaded by a horde of dusky faced men. They are coming over the river Severn in punts. As I stand there looking down from the hill the situation appears rather alarming, and for a moment I wonder whether I ought to run back to the fields to mobilise an army of land workers. Behind me is the centuries old village of Alveley which can be the only objective of the men in the punts. I can think of no explanation for such an

invasion. But on the other hand there are natives lower down the valley who see nothing strange in the landing of this little army. One old lady even pauses to wave to them with her stick. The explanation is perfectly simple. These men are the 105 miners of Alveley who cross the river every day to the coal pits at Highley and Kinlet. But who expects to find coal pits in this beautiful countryside? As far as the eye can see there is not the slightest suggestion of industrialism. No sign of a stack or of a pitshaft as I search the landscape. And in Alveley itself I saw only land workers, milk maids and drovers. The fact is that Alveley has a double personality. It is half mining and half agricultural. But if you call at the weekend or during the daytime the mining half is hidden. The colliers, on their return from the pits, admirably fit themselves into the surroundings and help to maintain the illusion that Alveley is old-world and knows nothing of industrial pursuits. After I had seen the pit workers coming back into their rural refuge I kept my eyes open and was surprised to find how easy it was to distinguish between those who worked on the earth and those who worked under it. There were the red faced awkward striding tillers of the land, with their soil stained corduroy trousers belted beneath the knees; and there were the sallow-complexioned, muscular miners, with little blue tell-tale scars on their faces, commonly known as the collier's birthmark. Alveley has a population approaching 1000 people but it has no unemployed. One old lady told me that her cousin lived in Walsall and was out of a job and she thought it very bad. She knew another villager whose second cousin lived in Birmingham and had been unemployed for several years. But while the villagers are all at work the wages are not very high. The average is not much above £2 and the families in Alveley are anything but small. Yet people live well, and the vicar who boasted to me of the village's unique record, told me that he was practically the only poor man in the place. "The men back horses and have tickets in sweepstakes and raffles, and the women go charabanc rides which cost 13s. a time", he said. "If I did that sort of thing I should be bankrupt what with rates and taxes and heaven knows what." Incidentally, the vicar is a broadminded man. He sees nothing wrong in the men having a shilling on a horse they fancy, and would quite willingly say so from the pulpit. He has preached to the villagers in the church and told them to play football and cricket on Sundays. He deplors that they do not follow his advice in this matter. When I saw him at the vicarage he was in his shirt sleeves looking as informal as any farm labourer in the fields. It is strange that here in Alveley where so many are employed in the blackest of all trades that I should be struck by the cleanliness of everything. As I climbed up towards the village from Hampton Loade the scent of the harvest met me - the haunting fragrance of burnished corn, freshly ricked hay and red and white clover. It was so lovely I paused, closed my eyes and breathed to my heart's content. The breeze that brought it embraced me with its clean warmth and penetrated my clothing to the skin. Those who have not enjoyed this rapturous pleasure of the scent of the harvest should feel sorry for themselves. It is like a drug that soothes the jaded nerves and fills the mind with delightful visions. And here in Alveley the visions actually materialise. The scenery is wonderful. There is nothing showy or flashy about it, no swagger or pomp. And if there is pageantry it is of a timorous bashful kind. It reminds you of the Shropshire girl who blushes as you meet her in the lane. Either side of the meadows that lead up to the village there are fields of corn stacked with golden avenues of sheaves, oceans of oats and black horse beans and close cropped hayfields where apricot tinted girls disport themselves. There are magnificent trees and there is soft music, a pastoral symphony for those who lend a sensitive ear. As I think of it now and remember the sight of those colliers in the punts I can scarcely believe such an incongruity can exist. At the entrance to Alveley two quaintly picturesque buildings stand sentinel. The one is a weather beaten tavern with the sign of a gargantuan bell hanging on a worm-eaten post, and the other is the ancient village church where Cromwell once rested with his bodyguard. The church and the tavern seem to be engaged in some sort of rivalry. They both seem to hail the wayfarer with an impartial "here you are sir, take your choice". Pausing in the lane I pondered the mute problem and wiped perspiration from my brow. As I did so two drovers approached with a flock of sheep. I noticed that the sheep, without a word from either of the men, halted between the tavern and the church and one of the drovers, as if obeying a familiar ritual, turned to track an aroma of malt hops to its source. When he returned the other drover slipped into the tavern. When the sheep had been driven away I saw that there was a flight of stone steps which led right over the 5ft boundary wall on one side of the churchyard. The thought passed through my mind that this habit of leaving cattle between the tavern and the church might

have something to do with the erection of this old stairway, the idea being to keep the waiting animals from desecrating the churchyard. The little cottages that line the narrow winding streets in Alveley are spotlessly clean with stone floors fit to eat off and brass which shines like mirrors. There is a reason for this. For generations the girls of Alveley have been trained for domestic service and so many of the lasses are engaged in the big country houses along the Severn Valley that there are at least 30 youths to every five girls resident in the village. As a result there are some lonely swains in the lovely lanes of Alveley for at least five nights a week, and also some contented husbands in the well kept little cottages. Before I leave Alveley I must tell you a story which has been retold for centuries in the village, and will be carried from father to child for many generations to come. It is about a crude stone pillar not more than five feet high which is to be seen in a secluded meadow on the outskirts of the village. When I saw it first - there is no inscription on the pillar - I thought that it marked the resting place of an erstwhile lover of the Shropshire countryside, perhaps one who shared with me the dread of being buried in a churchyard beneath an ugly tombstone decorated with a little fat cherub in a neat chemise. But I was wrong. This pillar is called, by Alveley people, the Butter Cross. They say that in the days of Charles II a Bridgnorth man went to London to be measured for a suit of clothes. The tailors made the suit and duly dispatched it, but before it left London the great plague had broken out and the suit brought the dreaded infection with it back to Bridgnorth. Alveley in those days sold butter to Bridgnorth people, and while the farmers could not afford to lose the trade, the fact that plague had broken out in the town precluded the idea of direct contact. So this is how the problem was solved. The Alveley people deposited their butter and other produce at the Butter Cross and then, when they had retired 500 yards, the Bridgnorth traders came up, took the goods and left the cash in receptacles that were sprinkled with disinfectant. A child in Alveley may not know the story of the gunpowder plot, but he will be able to recount to you, with all the ramification of detail and comment, how the Butter Cross saved Alveley from the ravages of the great plague of London.

John Wesley in Alveley - Colin C. Short

These notes are an extract from chapter two of "The Coming of the Wesleys" from my incomplete book "The Story of Kidderminster and Stourport Methodism" . On Wednesday 15th March 1769 John Wesley set out from Worcester for Shrewsbury. Turnpike Acts dating from 1760 provided roads from Kidderminster to Bridgnorth and on to Madeley. Further roads would take the traveller beyond this. However they were not in good condition. In his journal Wesley writes, "My horse being lame, and part of the road very bad, I did not reach Mr Lee's of Coton until noon. The house is delightfully situated in his park at the top of a fruitful hill. His Chaplain had just begun reading prayers; afterwards he desired me to give an exhortation. So I could not take horse till half an hour after one, when I had eight and twenty miles to ride on a lame horse. I came, however, to Shrewsbury between five and six and preached to a large and quiet congregation....." Alveley does not feature again in the Wesleys' story. Indeed I have not yet found any good information about the story of Methodism in Alveley. What I have is mostly names derived from a study of Highley. The Kidderminster Circuit included Alveley. The chapel at Alveley dates from 1862.

Memories - Alan Nicholls

The following are transcripts of conversations I have had in the last year about the memories of Alveley by local people.

Jack Jennings

The family has been connected with Alveley for years. My great, great grandfather was buried at the churchyard. My grandfather's name was John, his fathers name was George and his fathers name was William. My father was Harry Jennings. They were all Alveley people. My brother has two sons, one lives up Coton so there are still Jennings's around the parish. My father was born at Turley Green and

they moved from there down to the Lakehouse Farm and then to Coton Farm somewhere at the beginning of the century. We moved back up there in 1928. I went to Quatt school. When I went first there was Miss Barber who was the head teacher and Miss Croxton the junior teacher. Miss Barber lived at a house in the village and Miss Croxton lived with her parents, her father was the blacksmith at Quatt. There were around fifty children at the school at that time. It was one big room which had a big screen in between, infants one side and the older ones on the other. We did the usual lessons. but there was no football, cricket, rugby. We followed the hounds. I became a good runner at cross country. I joined Stourbridge Harriers when I was 21 and I could hold my own in the Midlands. We were in the Birmingham League, six counted in the team, I think they had five reasonable lads and when I joined it made a good team. I ran Jack Holden to five yards over six miles. I never trained, I used to follow horses up and down the field all day. One thing I remember is spinning tops on the main road. Not many cars on the road then. If you saw a car going up the road you ran up the playground to see it go by. There were steam lorries as well and horse and carts. We had one trip to the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley about 1923/4, by train from Hampton Loade. When I finished school I was expected to and had to work on the farm, I should liked to have gone into woodwork but I wasn't allowed to. We had to have two other labourers, then there was Lesley Mills and myself, that's four besides my father. There were three hundred and something acres, mixed farming. We'd grow wheat, oats, barley, potatoes, mangles and swedes, peas. We had an old orchard, we made cider every year, a cider press came travelling round. It was some good stuff. Mrs Nock had a cider press, just as you go down to the industrial estate, right on the corner. She had the old stone one. The one that came round was fixed on a chassis and an engine drove it. At harvest time there was a binder that went around and that cut it and tied it and threw it out, the threshing was done on a threshing box, one used to travel round. The first one I remember was Elcock's at Turley Green. They would come and do so many days then they'd move off because other folks wanted them. They wouldn't stop and thresh the lot. They'd come round again. If you had it all threshed you might not have the storage space for it, there were no silos or dryers. We'd have pickers come out to pick peas, Dolly came one time. Her mother was another good worker. Dixter, her dad, was a bit of a character. There were quite a lot of these old characters about the country but they've died out now. I worked with horses before the war, two for ploughing ordinary, but three for deep ploughing. I took over the horses when I was eighteen. We had the two children during the war. We had to work harder. We didn't go short of food or anything like that. The War Ag. came around and said we must plough up much more land. We grew mainly grain. We had two evacuees from Liverpool to start with but we were too far from schools so they took them away. Was I thankful. They were about ten and eleven, and they were just like little animals let loose. We only had them two days. There were Americans at the army camp at Astley. They were only there for so long and then another lot would come in. A batch of whites then a batch of coloureds. They were trained in laying mines. We got quite friendly with some of them. We had the searchlight school at Coton. They were billeted in the stables at Coton and the headquarters were at Dudhill House. They had the searchlight on our ground. The Northumberland Fusiliers. There was one lot from Glasgow. I was in the Home Guard. There were two groups in the village, one at the pit and we were the other. We had an observation post at Coton, at the back of the cottages. All we had was a table with a compass on and if we saw a light or anything unusual we would report it. One of us was supposed to be on duty all the while and the other had a sleep. We had a caravan as accommodation it came from the old quarry at Alveley. We were called the local defence volunteers at the start. There were twenty to thirty in the group, mainly from the farms but a few from the village. We met at the Squirrel. We had rifles and ammunition, we started with broom stales. We did a bit of drill, not a lot. Lesley Pitt was our commanding officer. We were sitting at home when we heard a whoosh, you'd no idea where it was coming down. There were three bombs, one at Astley, one at Nobby Clarke's and one at Turley Green, but that didn't go off. There was a hole there, they had the people out from Bridgnorth but they thought it was an incendiary bomb, but at three o'clock it went up. We had a grocer from Bridgnorth who would come around to take the order then a couple of days later the van would deliver it, and you paid him next time he came. The butcher came round, Beddoes, Massey before him, the baker came round The electricity was installed about 1948 we had candles and lamps before then, open fires to keep warm, plenty of blankets. We left Coton in 1952 and went to the Bine

Farm at Wooton. We stayed there until we retired about 1970. We never made a fortune, it was hard going, it wasn't very good ground, terrible wet. I had one chap working for me until my youngest son left school and wanted to start. The youngest is now at the house we retired to at Saddlers, he's packed up farming. We had to work hard but we enjoyed it. The Black and White Minstrels were mentioned in the book, (transactions 1995) and someone said it was about 1910. It must have been before that because I've seen a photograph of them and my father was in it so I reckon it's at the start of the century. It was a minstrel show the adults put on at the school. The village band used to have a sports day on a Whit Tuesday on the field on the right as you go down to the industrial estate. Pony racing, foot racing Harley's had the Three Horseshoes. Ben Harley was at Allum Bridge, he lost his one arm. He was out shooting with his brother in law and the gun went off and he lost an arm. He had watercress beds at the paper mill. They had a building business, he was an undertaker. Hubert Norgrove worked for him at one time.

Freda Wheeler

I was born Freda Scriven in Alveley in 1922 at 39 Alveley. My dad's name was Frederick Scriven and mum's was Ellen Kirkham, she came from Birmingham. I have a half sister from my mother's first marriage. Mum's first husband was killed in the first war at Coventry. Dad was born in 1886 and died 1936, mum was born in 1890. My dad was a miner at Kinlet, Highley and Alveley. He was a stallholder at Highley which meant that he was in charge of so many men who worked together. His stall was number 40 so they put that number on the trucks that went up so they knew who'd done it. It was pick and shovel then. Dad got Sinovitis in his knees and elbows and then smashed his thumb. He worked on the farms as well, trussing, that's making bales as they are today. He used to cut them with a big cutting knife. Dad's nickname was Blackbird. He had to retire from the pit because of his lungs. Mum worked in the fields pea and potato picking, only seasonal work. My granddad was a quarryman, his name was Jacop Scriven and grannies name was Dinah Slater. My father had brothers Chris and Tom and a sister Rose. Tom was a grave digger and so was granddad. Granddad was at the Nott Lye quarry by the Butts then he came to the one by the church. He was crippled and so was granny. They lived at No. 21 by Grove House. When I was a kid we used to play top and whip from Chapel to Church to see how many swipes it took us to get through. No traffic then. One of the first vans to come was Brook Bond with solid tyres. We used to follow the steam lorries from the Shoes. I loved the smell of them, they used to stoke them up by the Shoes before they started off down. At school I was in Miss Hardestys class first and then went to Miss Wood, then to Miss Richards and last to the headmaster Mr Benson. He moved down to the new school but Miss Wood didn't get a job because she hadn't got the qualifications. We had knitting and sewing, embroidery and there was a range on which we made a Christmas cake. At the old school we had to come down by the farm to the toilets, there were big old stoves, big high windows and lamps. We played in the road outside the school and had to stand in front of the Chantry House for assembly. Mr Shepherd lived there. I passed the exam for the High School at Bridgnorth but couldn't go because dad had a big accident down the pit. I worked at the Round House when I was twelve at the swimming pool cafe then did various jobs all round the area. We went dancing at Shatterford and Kinver and all over. I played in the womans football team at the back of the garage. Just before the war I moved to my sisters in Coventry. I was there all through the bombing working at BTH armature winding. I came to Bridgnorth after that to make engines for the Wellington bomber, I worked as a Universal Grinder and my husband to be worked as a setter. I was 19 when I married at the Chapel in Alveley, the minister was Evelyn Pearson. We lived at 27 Alveley, Arden House at the Pools Row. Women weren't allowed in the working mens club, it was only a tin shed, until after the war. My first husband was on the committee. My husband came back from the war and went to work at Bridgnorth but died when he was 41. I then worked at Shatterford riddling potatoes. They had buries in the fields and we pushed a riddle out to them and sorted them by size. I did that for twenty three years. Then I went to Bill Head at Cooks Cross, swede cutting, but had to finish because of my back. Randy and Dick Turpin, the boxer, used to come here. Randy fought Sugar Ray Robinson. For the Coronation celebrations we had a party in the street. All the kids had a Coronation cup, an orange and a threepenny bit in the cup. We had dancing in the street at night to my radiogram. Gil Woods father and

my granddad Kirkham were cousins. We used to make cider at the Bell. The horse went round and round the press squeezing the juice out of the apples. In the bottom shed they had the barrels. They put funnels in the end, scooped the rough cider and filled the barrels. Then they'd unscrew the press and pull it up again, undo the horse and then fill it with apples and start again. The New Inn was a shop when I was a kid, a sweets and general shop. Bill Massey had the butchers then Jim Beddoes had it. We used to pull the rope through the window bars, pulling the cows in to be slaughtered with a knife.

Charlie Bywater

My parents had a smallholding at Crows Mill. About thirty one acres. We had a few pigs, sheep and cattle. We had a fair family. There was a well in the rocks. I expect it's still there, hewn out of the rock, it would freeze your teeth off even on a hot summers day..... My father had some trouble with the gamekeeper Dave Garbett and he started to use the stick a bit but my father kicked at it..... We lived later in the house at 52 in the village and at Centre Place. My father was a stonemason. The business fell off so they had to find other employment. He worked at Webbs Quarry, Billy Webb, stutterer, they called him Why Why. I had a bit to do with him. When we went to Crows Mill we had to get some horses and drays to move stuff and he lent them to us, but it took a lot of patience to wait for him to make up his mind. He'd walk around you a few times. I remember the school being knocked down. I didn't lose many tears about it. Everybody said the traffic would shake it down, but it stuck there. It was a lone chimney. We played in front of the school, tip cat, rounders, I haven't seen tip cat played for a long time. We would dig a hole, sharpen a stick, not too sharp, about 9 inches long, and you'd have a long stick to tap it with, tap the tip cat in the hole, fly it up, and if you hit it the furthest you was the winner. We used to play from by the flag pole. I left school to work at home. I worked for John Robert Clarke for a bit, helping the baker and all sorts, Narborough was the miller. He employed me as a stock man, he used to deal in corn, pig feed and that. Miss Knight at Clarkes shop was a very nice lady. If you wanted any questions answered she was the one. Round the side and at the back they had a deck there with stuff on show. The band used to come around at Christmas playing carols, I remember them about the village..... We went swimming and we used to go to the Nautical but it got a rough house in the fifties. I carried the wages to them that were sinking the pit. A gang from George Brown and Co. they were specialists for the job. I took the wages down to the quarry when they came through the post. They did the same when they built the bridge. We used the ferry to go over to the pit before the bridge. We used to paddle the punt across when the river was up. We used to have to paddle a good way up and then push across. Old Joe Knowles, the boatman, was a hell of a good sport, he was an old man but a wonderful sport, for a bit of fun We used to get a concession of coal. Breakwell used to convey it through the river, I've lugged coal through the river. There's a cart road through the river, they used to bring a lorry full of stone and drop it into the river now and again. On the side there was a big stone with the water level on it. You got your coal stocks in the summer. We got an allocation of 6.6 tons a year. When the coal rose in price I knocked the odd point six off so I didn't have to pay any more. It was 12s 6d a ton. ... The pit ponies came to the surface in the summer holidays but it was a hell of a job to get thirty four ponies up.

Bill Morgan

I was born in Wales. I was only six months old when I came up here. My parents moved from Alveley to Wales to work in the mine. Then the work was running out down there so they came back into Highley. My dad's name was William Morgan. he was from Alveley. My mother was born in Birmingham, Daisy Clews. We lived at 90 Daddlebrook, they called me Bill 90. My father died there We weren't very well off, the old chap was ill for years. He died young at 56. I had four sisters. They're gone, all dead, they were all born in Alveley, Sarah, Daisy, Lizzie and May. My sisters went into service. In the farms, two were at Astley farm when the Cross's were there. After they got married one went to Liverpool, one ended up in Nottingham. I'm seventy eight now. (1995)

I went to the old school. The teachers were Mr Davis, there were two Davis's, Mr Benson. The old school

master was Mr. Shepherd. The teacher Miss Hardesty taught me when I was five, she had a little bungalow opposite chapel lane. She came from Manchester. They were good days. I liked school. We did singing and arithmetic, with a bit of history and agriculture. There was no acting the goat otherwise it was the stick. We used to play in the street, we had no playground. I've got a relation who planted a tree outside the school and it's still there now with railings around it. I can remember dodging the horse and wagons when they came through, they used to come up past the old school. from the quarry. The old quarry was going then like. When we were kids we weren't allowed down the quarry. A chap the name of Webb owned it. There were wagons that used to go to Brierley Hill pulled by four horses. The waggoner's name was Jack Yeomans, Tommy Yeomans dad. Webb had Pennycroft down here. Tom Wilkes worked there, Sid Sorrells father worked there, and a fellow called Link, Snerps we used to call him.

The headmaster, Benson, used to live at the Chantry House, they moved to Romsley after.... There were four teachers, we had the old coke stoves in the winter, we had Horlicks. I was a monitor. We used to have oak ball day, 29th May, if you hadn't got an oak ball they'd sting you with a nettle. Oak apples you'd call them. There's a tree across the field here, we had the conkers. Marbles were the thing in our day, hopscotch the girls. A ginger was the best marble, we used to call them alleys, a big ginger.... I can remember the big open top coaches, the charabancs.

Dad worked down Highley pit. They had coal cutters in but not conveyors. And they used to do what they called hand hole, down on their haunches hacking out the bottom and then they'd blow it with explosives. They'd hack out underneath then drill a hole and then put the explosive in and blow it. Later the cutter cut the bottom of the coal seam, then we used to blow it with explosive, load it onto the conveyor which was a belt or chain about 100 yards long and then it went into the trucks and out on rails to the top. The road in went by a fossilised tree with everyones names engraved in it. Plain as can be. The bark and everything was there. There were a lot of ferns. I went down the pit when I was 14. Highley pit. I was pony driving when I was there first. We called it stall work. There was different roads went in off the level and you had two stalls to look after and you had to get the wagons up there and take the loads away. You had to treat the ponies right take a piece of grass or some fruit. We had a manager come, Machin, and he said the horses had got to go. That was after the war. It was hard work mining's never easy. They couldn't fully mechanise it. There was what they called stall holders, they'd have the stall, say about fifteen yards, then there'd be another stall. The road goes in to the face and we used to drive into that with the ponies with the wagons and tip them up on their sides, then pull the loads out, take the wagons on to the face and fill them again, then take them out. The stall holders could be four in shares. They'd have labourers working for them, about 7s6d a day they used to get and the stallholder would have whatever they made. They could have double your wages perhaps. They used to have two stalls as a rule. They had to do the ripping as well to keep the road so the wagons could get in and out. You'd have the face and there would be roads going in to each stall. I started at Highley pit, we went across the river. I got up at six. From Potters Loade, only a small boat that would take nine or ten. We had some rough rides on there when it was in flood. We used to wait until we had a load then go up the river and strike over to get to the other side. We had a paddle apiece. When the river was low it was hand over hand on a rope. Got to be there for ten to seven. Over the railway and the pit was just up the lane. You could see the stack from Alveley. When I first started as a kid I did twelve and three quarter shifts for fifteen and eight pence. A shift was seven and a half hours. Three quarters of a shift on a Saturday. The fare on the boat was seven pence. My brother in law's parents kept it then, Knowles. I worked on the bridge. When the pit mound caught fire they put tons and tons of sand on there. It burned for several years. It used to smell down there. We had chaps at the pit from Durham. Young chaps, the manager from old Highley pit went up and got them, before the war that was, 1932-3. They stayed at Highley, lodging. They were a sorry sight when they came, no shoes on their feet. Destitute, there was no work up Durham. All the pits had closed down and the shipyards. A lot of them drifted back. There's still one or two in Highley now. We had a Bevan boy. Astbury. He was the youngest manager that ever took on a mine. The miners went to night school at Bridgnorth. At Highley they used to have the old school for lessons in the evening. I enjoyed working down the mine. They were

a marvellous gang of fellows to work with. If you were stuck they'd always give you a hand.

Bamford and Gee from Nottingham sunk the Alveley shaft, and they built the bridge, I worked on the bridge. A little Austin Seven used to run the ropeway. They buried it in the ground and worked it off the back wheels. It took buckets of cement to where it was used. It was the gaffers, come from Derbyshire. The bridge was built in 1937-38. I worked on it until it was about two yards from the middle. I got a penny an hour more than the others for working up in the air. I worked at Shatterford before I came on to that. The cage went down, the rope broke and it went down. I was down the pit, had to come up in a bucket. I didn't go down there any more, the pit closed about six months after. I did a lot of work in the Alveley shaft. I used to work part time on the farms, at Dumballs, I used to go there in the mornings because I was on afternoon shift for about twelve years. Started my shift at the mine at half past two til quarter past ten.

There was only the pub, and we'd go dancing at the village hall. They had dances at the club room at the squirrel. There was no falling out or fighting or anything like that. There was a bowling green at the village hall, but the big nobs had that, the farmers and quarry owners and the like. I used to play football but not cricket. Alveley pitch was at the top of Astley bank at Coton Hall. At Coton Hall they had the trees chopped down there by the hall so that they could see the cricket matches. They had a club walk. We had running competitions and sports. They had it on the Squirrel field. The club walk was the services, army, navy and air force, down to the Squirrel. We used to dance round the May Pole. We used to pinch the swedes. I had a catapult, the policeman had me for it. The policeman was an uncle to Joan, his name was Humphreys.

We had four children. No five, we lost one. Geoffrey died three weeks old. Then Maureen, Margaret, Derek and Basil. My wife worked at Kidderminster at the carpet factory. They used to bike it, there were no buses early in the morning then. From Highley they would go on the train. And on Whittles when they started up. They started as a little black wagon. The first they had was fetching colliers off the Clee Hill to Highley Pit. A black wagon, they used to call it the black wagon. The very old Whittle was a deputy down Kinlet pit and they caught him asleep. Then he started the bus service up and it growed. They used to lug coal during the war.

They had a cider press at the Bell. In the yard. There was also a cider mill between the houses at the top of the pit lane. All the farmers used to bring their apples, there was a lot of orchards around here then. We used to go chestnutting in the park at Coton but if you saw them you had to salute to them. They come to us once, I never saw them, "don't you know who we are, aren't you're supposed to salute." I was working at the pit then..... We used to have walnuts and scrump apples from Holmes orchard. I remember one playtime going into the orchard scrumping and they were waiting for us when we came back up. Old lady Gwilt owned the orchard. There was a chip shop now and again, one at the bottom here and there was one at the nautical at the little cottages. Jack Scriven had a little chip shop down the bottom here. In 1937 I was a member of the Working Mens Club. It was only a tin shack then. I remember the band playing at Christmas and at any big occasion. They went around carol singing with the full band at Christmas.

The horses used to pull the coal from Highley across the river, Hampton Loade. The colliers used to get an allowance of coal, a ton a month, that's the way they used to bring it in summer. When I had it it was 14s6d a ton. We used to give it away. I was reported once for giving it away, but you couldn't use it. I remember Clarkes shop Miss Knight used to have the one side of the shop. No one was allowed on that side, shoes and that she used to sell. She even booted out the son Phillip. She had a bungalow built on the old road by the Finger. Clarke's went broke, Nobby gambled and lost it. He used to ride a little motor bike and he would come up to Astley to play cricket, we had a runner for him. We used to have to push him up Astley bank. We tried to sign on for the war but were told we couldn't go. One or two bombs were dropped, one at the Finger, one at Astley Bank and one near Turley Green. We had one or two planes come down. One came down at Lowe Lane. Wellington Bomber. I was in the home guard. On the main

road we used to have a hut. Fellow named Pitt was over us, he had a bungalow by the river side. He had a riverboat. His son owns Hadleys. We used to drill and have manoeuvres across the fields. We had one rifle between us but no ammunition. Woods of the Bell had the New Inns. The one that had it fell down the stairs and broke his neck. Gilbert Wood's uncle. A fellow named Monk owned that row of cottages. My father did gardening for him at Little London. The old Monk always wore breeches and leggings. There was the shop where the post office is now. There was Miss Woods, one across where Miss Ward used to live. Auntie Tet's, Mrs Brooks, she went funny and gave everything away in the shop, I was a kid at school then. We went swimming at Fenn Green, took the kids. A chap named Derek Bircher had it. He had a big garage in Kidderminster where the Picture House was. There's three streams underground there. He built the Nautical William and the Round House too. We had football dinners there. When the Nautical first opened they had a chap on the door dressed up as a sailor. My sister worked there, all of them dressed as sailors.

Tom Cadwallader

This interview with Tom Cadwallader of Highley was recorded by Gwyn Williams in 1983 as part of an A level project looking into the social consequences of mining in the area. Gwyn is asking particular questions about the mining community in the Highley and Alveley areas. Tom seems to have worked in the offices of the Highley Mining Co. and has memories of happenings in the 1930's. The interview was edited, transcribed and typed up by Alan Nicholls in 1995.

Gwyn. Could you tell me a bit about the Co-op. Tom. The co-op was run by a committee, mainly made up of miners, who invested the money. The committee was elected annually. The co-op was popular because it paid 3s.4d. in the pound dividend on what was bought. The committee had a say in what was bought and sold. They used to have certain kinds of pit boots and safety clothes. Gwyn. Did the Whittles brothers work at the pit? Tom. There were three Whittle brothers and they started up in 1927 as a haulage business. They had a pony and dray and they used to haul coal. Their mother kept a fish and chip shop and a grocery shop and somebody in the family would take a horse and cart round selling off the cart. They developed it and in about 1928 there was a new road built in Highley and Whittle's bought a new motor lorry, they had three lorries in the end. Gwyn. Were the roads very bad in the 20's, did people use the train more to get into, say, Bridgnorth. Tom. The roads weren't very good generally. It didn't pay to run a bus so the factory girls used to go to work on the train. It was only about sixpence halfpenny on the train. Eventually they went on the bus because it went to the door. Gwyn. When did buses really start to come in. Tom. About 1926-27 they started to run. Gwyn. A lot of miners did extra work, can you remember people keeping animals in Highley. Tom. Yes, pigs and sheep. The pigs don't need much management, around Highley there were various places. They kept pigs on the allotments in shacks. It's very easy to rear pigs and they were quite profitable, the market at Bridgnorth was pen for them each week. Quite a few worked part time on farms. Gwyn. Do you know anything about the mining classes? Tom. Yes there was usually a class running with about fifty attending which led up to a man getting his deputy certificate. That was the main course for the miners. They could use it in the pit. Gwyn. Was there a brass band from the pit. Tom. There was Highley Brass Band. It was based at the working mens club. There were fifty or sixty in it, mostly miners. Gwyn. When did it pack in? Tom. I can't remember, but after the war. Gwyn. Were dances popular? Tom. There was Alveley village hall Saturday night dances which were very well attended. Highley and most of the villages around had dances, they had a band and a bar and ran from 8 til about one in the morning. Gwyn. I've heard charabanc rides were popular, where did they go to? Tom. Yes Whittles used to do them. Llandudno and places like that, Blackpool and all around Gwyn. Did whole families go? Tom. Yes. Gwyn. What about the working mens club was it popular? Tom. Yes they would run entertainments such as whist drives and dances and so on. They were also a meeting point where you could have a chat. Non members were very welcome and women also. Gwyn. Were there any particular festivals. Tom. The miners community in Highley held galas. Gwyn. Was it a friendly community in Highley? Tom. There

was Highley Colliers football team, they were very good. Gerry Hitchen was one good player. Gwyn. The Severn Valley Railway laid on trips to the races, was there much interest in backing horses or gambling. Tom. Oh yes - if the money was there. Gwyn. How well off were the miners? Tom. It varied, the mine provided them with a good wage but they didn't earn a fortune. Friday was pay day. Gwyn. Did people tend to work in groups down the pit? Tom. Well it changed in the last twenty years to the conveyor system. If you go back a bit it was the old "Butty" system where a man and his brothers and sons would work together, various shifts at the same place of work. Gwyn. Did that change at all? Tom. Not very much but the conveyor system was different altogether. It started about 1942. You couldn't work it the same. The idea was the same, to share the money the gang earned. Gwyn. Did the groups tend to stick together in leisure time? Tom. Quite a lot but not always. When they was down the pit they were there to make some money but outside it was another thing. Brothers don't always play together. Gwyn. Were there always a lot of people living in the same house in Highley? Were the families large? Tom. The pit houses had three big bedrooms with a toilet that was put inside in later years, it all gradually improved. Gwyn. Did the company help people from other areas find housing? Tom. Yes they found lodgings for them. Some old ladies made a living from it. Some Durham boys came and took lodgings with Mrs. Reynolds, families took lodgers too. Gwyn. How many meals would the landladies provide? Tom. Just like living at home in a family. Gwyn. Was there a demand for colliery houses that the Highley Mining Co. owned? Tom. Yes they were good houses. Kept in good repair. A gang of men went round doing repairs. Gwyn. I've got some figures of rents from as low as 2s9d. in the 1920's, that was in Bynd Lane. Tom. That's Billingsley that is. There was a pit at Billingsley. Gwyn. Were they bigger houses at Woodhill Road, Beech St, and Ash St., the most expensive were 8s3d. end houses were more. Tom. They were residential houses, they're still there. Some of the houses at Bynd Lane were tin sheeted houses, it could be one of them. Gwyn. Did you know any people from Stafford who managed at Highley? Tom. When I went there in 1929 there were quite a few from Stafford, the top people more came from Stoke. Gwyn. Could you tell me a bit more about the Durham boys. Tom. There's still a few about now. Ron Richardson in Alveley, the council houses at Peacock Hill, came from Durham. You can tell by his accent. Gwyn. How many were there? Tom. It varied, they used to get homesick. There was a good turnover in the early thirties. Gwyn. Were there any from South Wales? Tom. Oh yes, and some from Newcastle on Tyne, Jack Scriven's wife came from there. Gwyn. What sort of coal allowance was there? Tom. They charged them 12s6d a ton and allowed one ton a month. It was very generous. Gwyn. Was there always a coal fire going? Tom. A lot of them still get it. You had to be 65, now they let them have it at 55. Gwyn. Did they ever stop at the pit? Tom. We had occasional days off. We had a strike, although the relationship was quite good with the managers. They were sensible, they didn't want to lose the money, they tried to settle their disputes by negotiation. Gwyn. There were disputes though? Tom. Yes, and we occasionally got involved in disputes from further afield. Gwyn. Were you isolated from other areas of mining? Tom. Yes, we were just far enough away from others. Gwyn. Where were your markets for the Highley coal. Tom. We used to send fifteen to twenty truckloads of slack to Kidderminster carpet factories. Then we sent it all down country to Torquay and South Devon Coal Co. To Shrewsbury, Bridgnorth and all Shropshire, Tenbury Wells, Ludlow and all around the area. Gwyn. What sort of industries were taking it? Tom. All the metal works of the Black Country, the Hopyards used to buy it to dry the hops. They sent it to Wales. They had pits of their own but they used to buy off us. Gwyn. Did the railway help? Tom. Yes it was the easiest way to send it. Gwyn. Who was the biggest buyer? Tom. Kiddie was our best buyer for slack. Austin Brothers was coal merchants who sold it to the various factories, they took twenty trucks a day. Gwyn. Can you remember any people dying down the pit? Tom. We only had small accidents, one incident in particular. There was a separate shaft chopped out and men were working in it and it fell away, like, and two of them were killed. You know where the road goes out to the main road here, the shaft was there. Gwyn. Did a lot of women in Highley work or were they mostly housewives? Tom. A lot worked at the carpet factory and married women carried on working. Two or three hundred worked at Kidderminster, up and back on the train. Gwyn. Did men tend to go out without their wives to social functions? Tom. They did yes, but not excessive, plenty didn't. Gwyn. Were people proud of being miners? Tom. There was very few done it

because they enjoyed it. Mainly for the money. Gwyn. How long were the holidays. Tom. When I first went it was a week a year Gwyn. What do you think the real importance was the mine to the area? Tom. It found work for a lot of people. They missed it after it had gone

Basil Morgan

This is the transcript of a talk between Rev. Bill Pryce and Basil Morgan, at Basil's home in 1995.

I was born and bred in the village in a little black and white cottage at 90 Daddlebrook and went to Alveley school til I was 15. There was 149 children at the school at the time. I started there in 1943 when I was four. It was a marvellous school, very strict. The learning and teaching was second to none. My father worked down the mine all his life, mum worked on the land during and after the war, then went to work at the carpet factory at Kidderminster. Marvellous parents. We moved in 1947 when the first sixteen houses of Peacock Hill were built, the last year we were in the little cottage the brook flooded and came up to the fourth stair. I left school in 1954, the Bevan Boys were still in operation and there was two years national service so if you didn't work down the pit you were liable to be called up at 18. There was very little work in the village and the carpet factories took a few of the school leavers but the fathers got their own sons jobs there. The farmers took a few. I left school on Good Friday and started down the pit on the Tuesday. The first days training started at 7.30. I did six months training, two days at the mining school, three days at the pit. The first day down the mine was frightening, it's dark, it's black, it smells. The stables where the pit ponies were kept still had the horse smell even though some years before the horses had finished. I went round with the safety officer Mr. Crowther, still alive today, who took me all through the pit, along the faces, testing for gas, the airflow, the air doors. To open an air door you had to first open a little flap and the pressure would blow your helmet off, then you could open the door. We attended mining school on Wednesdays and Fridays. After six months training it was only one day a week school. The big thing then was apprenticeships, you could go as apprentice fitter or electrician, or shot firer etc. I was paid £3- 9shillings the first week. Out of that came 10s towards the cost of the boots, the first helmet was free. Some miners used to wear soft hats but if the safety officer caught them they were in trouble. For the first six months I started an apprenticeship for electrician but the wages was £1- 6d and I couldn't afford it. The apprenticeship was seven years. I gave it up. I went into the back end getting supplies, we called ourselves timber lads, getting supplies to the face. The top money there was £9- 5s a week. You weren't allowed to work on the face until you were 18. At 18 you were allowed to go on contract work, we did 60 days training. 20 days on coal starting with four and a half yards of coal. 20 days packing, 10 days chaining which was to throw the belt over which were on the face that brought the coal down the face and out onto the conveyors, then you'd do 10 days ripping which was after the coal was extracted the road was blown to make it eleven foot seven, then we'd put rings in to form the roadways. On a face we'd have three roads which would be the left hand tension, the main gate and the right hand tension. The air would come in the left hand tension, travel down the face, into the main gate, out and into the right hand tension and on. The reason they were called tensions was a way into the work but also to take pressure off the face. The packing that I touched on, you would put a six and a half yard pack which was put in solid rock up to the face where you'd extracted the coal from but there was always a four foot six gap for the chain so you could work next day. After you put a six and a half yard pack on there would be a six and a half yard gap, then another pack. The idea was that doing six and a half yards and then the gap it would take pressure off the face and when that caved in it would be the rock that you would used to form the packs. That helped to support the roof. Each day as you had a throw over, the reasoning behind a throw over was that any given time there would be a nine yard gap, you would then throw the chain over from where you had originally taken the coal then that would leave the four foot six gap behind the chain where you would form your packs continually right the way through. That was the idea behind taking pressure off the face, the left hand tension. Of course the main gate would work as the same idea, but that was where the coal went onto the main conveyor belt onto what we used to call the loader, where it loaded onto the little wagons, although in later years there was a train and the wagons were much bigger. The

original wagons carried about thirty hundredweight, all of them were marked. Each section of the pit was set off in districts, the idea being that they would know where you was at any time if a disaster would happen. The reason for marking the wagons was that there were several faces A to F and the farmers were reimbursed the mineral rights while we were passing under their land. A note was kept on the surface. The only part of the pit they weren't allowed to extract coal was under Alveley Church because that was consecrated ground. A fully fledged miner would have six and a half yards, we'd cut four foot six in, the face would be three foot high mostly, we'd have wooden posts with a bar to go over the top to carry the face, there was rigid posts, wooden posts and as later Dowty props which were hydraulic. You pumped those up and there was a fast release button. Then you had the modern chocks that came in. There was an eighty year old man working down the pit at one time, a chap named Poyner. Bert Bliss was killed on a ropeway, Vic Bow was killed operating the cage. I worked with a lad from Kidderminster who left and joined up for national service nicknamed killer Perks, he was posted to Cyprus and was ambushed and shot dead after three months. Another chap was in the RAF after the mine and he hit a mountain in his plane. You were safety conscious down the pit and knew your enemy there. While you were working it was warm but if the machinery was turned off and you sat down a bit it was bitter cold. My dad had the nickname of bozer and his father and grandfather and so was I. My uncle was bowser as well. It must have originated from a job they did down the mine once. I know that there was a machine at one time called a bowser. There was another man whose nickname was ripper because he always worked on back ripping which is a job after the coal has been extracted to form the roads. There was trees fossilised in the mine stood straight up, we termed them as potholes, we had to put a support under them straight away as they could drop without warning, the bark of the original tree would form a film of coal and when they were exposed the air would eat away at the coal and they would drop. I saw one that had fallen, what sort they were I wouldn't know but they had thick bands around them about every three feet. In one part of the pit there are fossils of ferns, beautiful. There was a large tortoise type animal fossil in a glass case in the pit office. Going back to the village it was quite small, eighty houses if that. There was four on the Woodlands, Ivy Place, that's the original, The Yews, Townsend Farm, Bill Williams, the Post Office then used to be at the top of Hall Close drive. The family that had it were named Leith, their son perished in the war on the Burma Road. The post office moved to where it is now about 1948. Then you had the Grove, which was the big house, most of the stone from that was built into the fronts of the start of Daddlebrook Road, the houses on the left hand side, that was a solid wall that used to go down til the big red house, just past Holmes Orchard, then you went across the top of the village, you had Centre Place, four houses went down to the right hand side at the back of Centre Place where it was reputed that Robert E. Lee's forefathers were born or lived. There were two other cottages across the front of those, three more went down to the back of the houses that now form Holmes Orchard, those are down and gone. The Round House where we used to go swimming as kids was an open air pool, beautiful place, we used to go after school and be in there til 10.00 at night. They charged us two pence to go in, he'd call us out at half past nine then give us bread and cheese and rations were still in operation then, watch us halfway home, put us across the fields. There was heavy convoys still, in 1948, travelling the main road. The thing I remember most about my childhood is the way we'd got to make our own fun because there was no toys. We'd go across the brook, get balls of clay and roll them into balls and that would be our marbles, we'd bake them in the oven. The education in the school was very strict and the type of village that it was you'd soon get a buzz around the ear off anyone and if you went home and told about it you'd probably get another one. We used to help out the village blacksmith, Mr Baldwin, his house is now knocked down but the grate of his house can still be seen in the little wall that was left. We used to help him with the blow bellows, he'd make horse shoes. The blacksmiths shop was where Adams Close is now. The original outhouse is now used as a builders yard, the end of Ivy Place, the wall is still around it. I can well remember one day he promised us sixpence apiece for the work we did in the school holidays. When we went for our money he told us to get lost. The crisps used to come in tins and we got one of these tins full of water and went across to the blacksmiths and when his back was turned we lobbed this tin and put the fire out. Well he chased us across the top of the village. The old people of the village were great there were some lovely old people, characters. They worked hard but they played hard. The comradeship is still

here but not on the scale it was then. If a family had a problem then they would all close round and it was a problem shared or helped out. There were people who'd been prisoners of war, there'd be a band in the street, everybody would go in the houses, you could leave your doors unlocked and your neighbour would look after you. The water was from taps in the street then, about four in the village that supplied all the water. There was one in Centre Place, one by the Post Office, one by Daddlebrook. The pumping station, the ram is at the bottom of Banky Whittle. When the taps froze in the winter the folk used to take it in turns to thaw them out. They would burn paper or wrap them in rags, everything. There are three wells in the village, the one is by Asgalore, just past the entrance to the industrial estate to the right hand side. Another one is round Turley Green, past Cooks Cross and there's a little dip just before you get to the main road and the well is on the left hand side. The third well is up at the Bow Hills farm, up the old Roman Road. For washing you'd always see the big boshes or tanks, they would save the water coming off the roofs. The taps were maintained by Mr Morris. His house was opposite Ivy Place just set back a bit, we used to call it smoke alley. I remember after school we used to go to the blacksmiths, get a piece of iron bar and run down smoke alley dragging it against the tin sheeting down there. One night one of the old chaps was waiting and caught one lad and layed into him with his leather belt. They'd wait weeks some times to catch us. Another house there was the New Inns, which was a pub years ago.

Fred Davies (Lukin)

The following letter from Fred Davies (Lukin) was received after an appeal in the Shropshire Star for memories of Alveley for these Transactions. It starts with an introduction and then looks at Fred's school days from 1922 to 1929 and then goes on to tell about characters and events in Fred's time at the village.

Introduction

As a boy I went to the old C of E school in the 1920's. The headmaster was Mr. Sheppard who was also the organist at St Marys church where I was a choir boy until leaving school in 1929. I have been back several times during the past few years but its not like the Alveley I grew up in. I went into the army 1940, married 1946 and settled in Staffordshire. I was adopted on February 9th 1922 on my 7th birthday along with my brother Cyril to the family of Sally and Jim Lukin. They lived at No. 1 Church Cottage, later moving to No. 48 Townsend, next door to Mr Bert. Richards and his wife Conny. I became known as Fred Lukin from the day I arrived in Alveley from Bridgnorth. My father was killed during the first war.. All through my schooldays my best pals were Arnold Wood, Sid France and Arty Richards, known as Nobby Richards, who remained my pal until I left in April 1940 to join the army. Others who went before, and with me , were Charlie and Maurice Evans, brothers from Fenn Green, Bob, Ted and Bert France, Harry and Ted Bennett, Alf Hopkins, Billy Leith and Les Garbett, known as Cocky Garbett, Les Link, and others. It was my intention to return to Alveley, where I worked at the mine, my job was to send the tubs of coal over to the Highley sidings, four at a time clamped to a wire rope. On demob from Germany I decided to first go and see my girl friend near Stafford, I had eight weeks demob leave and I was in no hurry to start work. I finished up getting married and settling there. Sadly she passed away last December 2nd. 1995

Schooldays 1922-29

The school was on two floors, infants and class one on the ground floor, 3-6 on top floor. Miss Hardesty taught infants but she spent most of her time trying to get, and keep, new starters in school. From class 2 you could be sent upstairs for caning, but very seldom arrived there. We would go up the stairs, which was on the outside of the classrooms, wait on the landing at the top for a couple of minutes and then go back holding your hand. If you got caught out then you got a double dose. Holidays were three weeks in summer, one Xmas and a long weekend at Easter. P.T. was lining up in four columns outside the school, then four would race up to the churchyard wall and back , that would continue until the last four had gone. Sunday school was held each Sunday and was taken by Rev. Eastern, the treat for attending was a tea

party at Coton Hall once a year at the pleasure of the Colvilles. They controlled the parish and what they said went. Less than twenty attended Sunday School. We had to walk to Coton and back for the tea, we had a few races in the park, prizes were 3d. 2d. and 1d. for first, second and third. Each year we were entered into the schools football cup. We had no strip or boots and we played in hobnail boots and ordinary clothes. We never won a game. We lost to Highley 18-0, St Leonards 14-0, Blue Coat School 8-0, St Marys, Bridgnorth 9-0 and so on. We did beat Quatt one Saturday morning 21-1 but they had to pick anyone who had two legs to make a team, failing that, I think some only had one. I will point out that this was only a friendly.

Characters and Humour

I had been to the May House farm (Winwoods) for some straw bedding for the pig. After bedding down our pig at No. 1 Albert (Ronke) Scriven, who lived next door, No.2, was coming from the Bell, one step forward, three sideways, four backwards. He was singing his usual two lines of, "She's got eyes of blue, that's my weakness now". Seeing me he offered me 1d. to bed his pig with our straw, which cost me 6d. He didn't get it. Christmas Eve 1938. Bill Williamson of Greenhouse Farm raffled a goose at the Squirrel. I won it. Thinking I'd have to pick it up at the Greenhouse, I left it at that. Just before closing time Lionel Hooper said, "have you got your goose", I said, "No where is it?", he said, "loose in the orchard across the road". Art Richards and Frank Handley came with me and after about half an hour of chasing we caught it and came on to the road. Out of the dark stepped the local cop. "Where are you going with that." "Home" I said, "come with me," he said, "let's hear what the landlord has to say." He propped his bike against the railings and went inside with us. In the meantime a certain person who had had quite a few pints, saw the bike and thought it would save him walking. On our way along by the village hall we found him sitting on the roadside, bike in the hedge, we threw it over into the field out of sight and, with a struggle, got the chap back to his lodgings at Wood's shop. He didn't remember anything next day so we told him nothing. The local never did find out who borrowed his bike. Tom Scriven lived opposite the Shoes and worked in Webbs quarry. He was also the grave digger. One dark night he was digging a grave by the light of a hurricane lamp. Someone saw him and hid behind a tombstone behind him, made a ghostlike noise, and said who's that for? Tom dropped the spade and lamp in the hole and rushed back to the Shoes for a pint. He was shaking with fright. Tom Bailey asked what was wrong and Tom told him that some bugger got out of a grave and spoke to him. No more was dug after dark. In the late 20's and early 30's the church fete was held at the vicarage, which is now an OAP's home. One year the vicar put a board in the gateway, saying, 'Not for your sake, or for my sake, but for God's sake, have three pennies worth.' One well known lass added, 'see me and you can have a shillings worth'. Pre-war a lot of people from Birmingham and the Black Country used to come camping at Fenn Green to Charlie Evans farm. One Saturday night at the Squirrel, the pub was full. Jack Watkins came in with an owl that he had caught. He sold it to a couple for 6d. which was a lot of money those days. Jack kept it for them till they went back on the Sunday. On arrival home they put it to roost on the rail at the foot of the bed and left the bedroom window open. Needless to say, being a bird of the night, it was missing next morning. They expected it to sleep all night. The saying of, 'one for all and all for one', was never stronger anywhere than in Alveley. I well remember, during the strike of 1926 everyone shared what they had. Those who had ferrets caught rabbits to share out. Wood pigeons were plentiful and cost nothing. Most had allotments, veg was not a problem as they all kept seed from the previous year. Xmas was a great time, the village band would play in the village early in the morning and then go all round the farms coming back with red noses. In late afternoon we kids went carol singing but were never allowed to ask for, or receive, anything, and it had to be a full carol. The pubs used to put huge dishes of pork and beef sandwiches, help yourself. That was all except Mr Harrison at the Royal Oak, but he did allow one free drink as it was a small pub, he was ever hardly overworked. They were hard times but we had fun and happy days. Thank you Alveley for letting me be part of your past.

The Tale of Twisted Tom

The following account was sent anonymously to the editor of the Shropshire Star in 1995. We had not heard the tale before and have no knowledge as to who the author is but we find it an interesting tale.

Dear Sir. I do not know how the legend of the 'Twisted Trees' at Tuck Hill came about, but I do know that there is an element of truth in the illegal killing. What I do not understand is how the story emerged as I thought I was privy to a well kept secret, one which I had almost forgotten about. The truth of the incident, as lucidly described by my father to me on my promise of absolute secrecy, was that his father, my grandfather, was one of the local men involved in the unintentional death of this unfortunate man who was known by a variety of names, one being 'Twisted Tom'. Apparently no one locally knew his real name but his various nicknames were the result of a terrible accident he suffered in one of the many foundries of the day causing him terrible scarring and deformity of his limbs. His unseemly appearance and the fact that he could not work caused him to be an outcast of society and, like many others, had to resort to any measures, including theft, to survive. According to my father 'Twisted Toms' activities ranged over a large area between Bridgnorth and Kinver, but Tuck Hill was his favourite winter quarter, mainly it seems because of the wild chestnut and other berries he could garner there to accompany his acquired 'game'. Despite the appalling injuries to his hands he was quite adept at self survival and, according to my grandfather, his cavernous coat pocket was his larder. The unfortunate killing of 'Twisted Tom' was indeed an unforeseen accident, although it is true that these three men, including my grandfather, did 'set out to teach Tom a lesson he wouldn't forget in a hurry.' One of the men, the son of a well known landowner, apparently angered by Tom's persistent stealing of his game, was the arch planner and persuaded the others, all now well fortified with drink, to catch Tom and give him the 'Persian Cat', which was apparently a reference to the barbaric North African punishment for stealing, the severing of fingers or limbs. Unfortunately Tom bled to death, but not before he had cursed his tormentors and promised retribution. The three men, now stricken with fear and the consequences of what they had done, panicked, gathered up Tom's body and hands into his large coat and buried him in a makeshift grave nearby. They quickly fled the scene and resolved to meet the following day when sober and able to think more clearly, which they did. They decided to go back that night, recover the body, and rebury it as far away as they could in an isolated spot. However, when they unloaded the cart to rebury the body they noticed the hands were missing and, despite a careful search, they could not be, and never were found. It was assumed that a wild animal had taken them. The three men, including my grandfather, were considered locally as gentlemen of some esteem and certainly not bad or evil men. They felt they were victims of a justified punishment that had gone horribly wrong. 'Twisted Tom' was soon missed though and within a short time all sorts of tales were being bandied about, some of which involved the names of my grandfather and his accomplices, very likely because they had been overheard at some stage. About a year later though a body resembling the description of 'Twisted Tom' was recovered from the Severn, the decomposed body was complete and showed signs of deformity to the hands so the matter seemed satisfactorily resolved. However with the passing of time my guilt ridden grandfather and his friends decided to write a confession which each signed. This confession was placed in a small casket and locked. It was placed in the care of the youngest man, to be opened at his death if he so wished. My father never found out what happened to that casket or if it was ever opened, and that is all I am able to tell you. When I was younger I used to wonder who 'Twisted Tom' really was, but of course that was a long time ago. I left the area just after the war when I married. I obviously cannot give you my name or address.....

Highley Mining Company Developments

The New Alveley Shaft 1935

The following article is a newspaper report of Saturday August 24th 1935 about the inauguration of the new Alveley shaft and was headlined as a milestone in the company's history.

"The new shaft which is being sunk by the Highley Mining Co., Ltd., at Alveley on the East bank of the Severn was officially inaugurated on Tuesday afternoon when, in the presence of a representative

gathering, the first sod was cut by the Chairman of the Company, Matthew H. Viggars. Mr. Viggars, who lives at Knutton, and is a county alderman of Staffordshire, is the sole surviving founder member of the Company, which has been in operation for 56 years. The new shaft, which will be 15 feet in diameter and 360 yards deep, will communicate with the present workings at Highley by a tunnel under the river, and the company also propose to construct a foot and truck bridge over the river, for which the sanction of the Severn Catchment Board has been obtained. The new development, which is anticipated will bring a considerably increased measure of prosperity to Highley, Alveley and the surrounding districts, is part of the policy of the company to meet the growing demands on its output, and the shaft has also become essential to provide for the adequate ventilation of the workings. It is confidently believed, from the geological evidence obtained, that that the new district to be opened up is the most likely coal-bearing area worth consideration in the company's sphere of influence, which, it is pointed out, is large enough to justify the sinking and equipment of the new shaft. The headgear which is over 50ft. high is of the latest pattern in reinforced concrete, designed by the British Reinforced Concrete Co. Ltd., of Stafford, and erected by Thomas Beighton, Ltd., of Chesterfield. The engine-house was designed by Messrs. Pritchard, Godwin and Clist of Kidderminster, and built by Messrs. L.H.Guest, Ltd., of Stourbridge. All the equipment is of the most up to date and eminent type. The electric winder is a Metro-Vick-Wild, AC geared single drum electric winder, by M.B.Wild and Co.,Ltd.,Birmingham. It is driven by a Metropolitan Vickers Electrical Co., three phase slip ring induction type motor..... The main power is 11000 volts and is controlled by an Ellison cubicle switchgear. The surface power is 400 volts and the lighting power is 330 volts. Amongst those present at the ceremony were Mr H.V. Eardley, general manager and director, Mr E.J. Walley, secretary and director, Mr T.H. Stonehouse and Mr D.W. Berrington, directors, Mr C.Nicholas, manager, Mr R.A.Bowen, Mayor of Bridgnorth, Mr Simpson Williamson, Chairman of Bridgnorth Rural District Council, Mr J.Oakley Beddard, Squire of Highley, Rev.A.L.Easton, Vicar of Alveley and many other representatives of customers and friends of the Company. Mr E.J.Walley said it was his privilege and pleasure to open the proceedings and on behalf of the company he extended to all those present a hearty welcome to the new site at Alveley. He hoped the latter part of their journey had not been too much like a hidden treasure hunt, and that all the starters were safely there. They were sorry that quite a number of their friends had not been able to come owing to their being on holiday. Unfortunately they could not postpone the ceremony until a later, and perhaps more convenient date, as everything was now ready for the sinking operations to commence, and naturally the contractors and the company were anxious to see the work started as soon as possible. The ceremony shortly to be performed would have been taken as coming in an ordinary days work with them, but although they could not promise that it would be quite as exciting as the Test Match, they felt it was an event that would be of particular interest to their shareholders, customers and other friends. That, he thought, had proved to be so, as indicated by the presence of such a representative gathering. They were pleased to have with them their chairman and directors, and also to see so many of their shareholders who had been able to come and see what they were doing. Further it was a pleasure to see so many of their customer friends, and although it was his pleasure to meet most of them regularly, he took the opportunity of thanking them on behalf of the company for their support and co-operation. It was largely due to their interest and efforts that the company had made the progress it had, and that day marked another milestone in its history which the customers had helped them to reach. Mr Walley referred to the pleasure it afforded the company to welcome representatives of local life - the Mayor of Bridgnorth, son of an old and highly respected employee of the company; the Chairman of the Rural District Council; Mr Beddard, their old friend from Highley; the vicar of Alveley, and representatives of the local press, together with representatives of the Great Western Railway Company, whose assistance and cooperation they looked forward to in their new scheme later on.

Alveley Manor Courts - Alan Nicholls

In the times before 1850 the Lord of the manor held a court each year. The courts were called the Court Baron and Court Leet. We are very fortunate that the manor court rolls for Alveley for the years 1750 to

1850 and a few earlier ones have survived as well as the Custumal of the parish. They are in private hands but I have made photocopies of the documents which are handwritten on paper and I have been transcribing these for some time. The following is the first batch court rolls which I have completed. The first document is the Custumal, which is given in full along with a sample of a complete years manor court proceedings. I will then present the more interesting sections from the subsequent years rolls.

Court Rolls are where the proceedings of the Court Baron were recorded and showed transfers or grants of land. In the case of copyhold tenure a copy of the relevant minute was given to an incoming tenant and this was deemed to be a title deed. Appointments of manor officers and the punishment of minor offences were recorded in the rolls of the Court Leet and View of Frankpledge. Very early rolls might also contain details of the management of the common fields. The Custumal was a statement, usually contained in the court rolls, of the customs of the manor, the services owed by free and unfree tenants, the duties of the town burgesses, and the rights and obligations of the lord. It was periodically recorded in the minutes.

Customary of Alveley Parish

Articles to be given to the homage to be enquired of and answered upon their oaths in writing on the behalf of the Lord and tenants as followeth.

First to inquire and p'sent who are copyholders, their name and quantity of land they hold of this manor, by what rent and service and where ye lant lieth, in what fields and names, butts and bounds, and what is due to ye Lord by copyholders at their deceases and alienations.

2. Item. To inquire and p'sent what is due to ye widdowe after the decease of her husband of copyhold land by custome within this manor, and what by custome w'thin this manor, and what by custome they are to pay or to doe to the Lord before they enter.

3. Item. To inquire and p'sent how long and for what time any copyholder of this manor maye sett or lett w'thout lycence and how ye usage and custome them hath byn, whether ye heire of a copyholder may sett or lett before he be admitted rente after ye decease of his ancestor.

4. Item. To inquire and p'sent whether ye copyholders of this manor be not punnishable and to be p'sented for wilfull waste in their howses, buildings and woods./

5. Item. To inquire and p'sent any incroachm't supposed to be made in ye lands betweene ye widdow Longmore and William Langley called Undrells.

6. Item. To inquire and p'sent what copyhold land hath bin exchanged one w'th another and whether any copyholder hath exchanged w'th any freeholder.

7. Item. To inquire and p'sent what tenants have bin deceased since the laste courte, either freeholder or copyholder, what lands and tenements they held, by what rents and suits, and who is next heire, and of what age. And likewise to p'sent what surrenders have bin made, by whom and to whom, and how copyholders and in what manor they make their surrenders, and ye custome in this manor.

8. Item. To inquire and p'sent if any copyholder w'thin this manor hath made any feoffment or executed any deede to raise uses of his copyhold land.

This next document is attached to the Customary and is the earliest Manor Court Roll we have. The year is 1624.

The form of this court is different from the later ones as this one refers directly to the Customary.

The p'sentment of the homage at the Courte Baron holden the third daye of March in the xxi th. yeare (1623) of our Sovraigne Lord Kinge James over England in answe're of div'e articles of that courte delive'd to them there in charged to inquire on the Lords behalfe.

1. To the first article they sayen that John Potter, sonne and heire of Nicholas Potter, doth hold of the Lord of this manor by Copy of Courte Rolle, one messuage and one half yardland w'th th' app'tenants thereunto belonginge, two akers called Edwins and three akers of land or thereabouts in a feild of this Lordshipp called Cheslake ?? feild, whereof the said messuage, garden, orchard and yard thereunto belonging are betweene the land of the said Lord, the Ryver of Syverne on all p'ts.

And also that Francis Raynolds is sonne and heire of Hugh Raynolds who died seysed of one messuage and one half yardland w'th th' app'tances in Alveley called Lakehowse and Normans ground and one toft and one nooke of land called Eamons holden by Coppy of one Courte Roll of this manor by the yearly rent of vii s., and that the said Francis hath longe ? thence delivered 2 kyne to Sir John Whitbroke for herryotte and ought to be admitted tenant. The said messuage w'th th' app'tances and p'mises are lying next to the common lane leadinge betweene Syverne and Kytherminster for all but his freehold holden of the said Lord as of Alveley manor late Jn Whorwoods w'ch is a small: ? quartilie.

And also that George Potter, sonne and heire of Thomas Potter doth in like manor hold one messuage w'th th' app'tances called Hilhowse w'th div'se lands and ten'ts to the said messuage belonginge and certaine land sometimes belonging to a tofte called Lyddiats, now Groves w'ch land, messuage w'th the gardens, orchards and yards thereunto belonging are sytuate in Alveley betweene the land of the said Lord at ye Moorehowse broke and Moorehowse and so round to Syverne on all p'ts ans some p'ts of the lands in Onyons Feild.

2. To the second they say yf the widdow of any coppingholder w'ch died seysed of any coppinghold of estate of inheritance accordinge to ye custome of ye said manor ought to have and holde for terme of her life the moietye of all such coppinghold whereof her husband so died seysed w'out any fyne therefore, payinge the halfe rente thereof due to ye Lord therefore.

3. To the third they sayen yt for all ye time of their remembrance w'thout any contradicion ye coppingholders of any lande of inheritance of ye said manor by their custome may sett or lett by word or wrytinge any of their customary lands for terme of xxi years w'thout lycence and no longer and yt as well before admittance as after, for co?? in ye said manor and seldome kept.

4. To the fourth they sayen yf any coppingholder of any estate of inheritance accordinge to ye custome of this manor may waste his said coppinghold w'thout punishm't or losse to any but himselfe and his heire.

5. To the fifth they know not of any such incroachm't w'thout evidence to guide them therein desire evidence.

6. To the sixt they know not of any such exchanges as in the article are mentioned.

7. To the seventh they sayen that Humphrey Jones who did hold of the Lord of this manor one messuage called Lydiatts and two akers of land called Hill Aker and Orchard Crofte by Coppy of Courte Roll deceased since the last court whereupon happened to the Lord an herryett

View of Frankpledge

The next document is the manor court roll of 1746. In Anglo Saxon times each vill or area was divided into tithings - associations of ten or twelve households which were corporately responsible for the behavior of each member. The tithing was also responsible for ensuring that any member accused of an offence was available to answer the charge. This system was called Frankpledge and at the manorial Court Leet a View of Frankpledge regulated the working of the tithings. The term is found in court rolls into the nineteenth century but it had long since lost its significance in practice.

Several terms used within the court rolls need some explanation. Fealty was an oath of allegiance made to the Crown or the lord of the manor. The Steward was the chief agent of the lord for the management of the manor and usually presided over the courts and kept the records. A herriot was an obligation, derived from Saxon times, of an heir to give to the lord a gift of the best beast or good of the deceased. It was abolished in 1922.

View of Frankpledge - 22 October 1746

The manor of Alveley, to wit :-

The View of Frankpledge with the Court Baron of Lancelot Lee esq. Lord of the manor afores'd there holden for the same manor the twenty second day of October in the twentieth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George the 2nd, King of Great Britain and in the year of our Lord 1746. John White,

Gentleman, Steward there.

Essoigns appear by the Suit Roll.

Jurors as well for our Sovereign Lord the King as the Lord of the Manor.

Mr. Thomas Holding, Francis Chidley, John Hayward, Richard Humphries, John Jordan, John Gorton, John Teverills, William Brook, John Davis, William Jordan, Francis Jordan, Francis Whitmore, John Doolittle

We present John Davis, William Jordan, Ra. Millard, William Snibson for continuing cottages on the waste within this manor, we amerce them in 6d. apiece.

Also we present William Gill, Ed. Ffox, Thomas Millard, John Millard, John Instans, John Gorton, for continuing cottages but not upon the waste, within this manor, and amerce them in sixpence apiece.

Also we present William Jordan, John of Turley, John Teverill, Thomas Wiggan, John Doolittle for continuing encroachments upon the waste within this manor and amerce them in three pence apiece.

Also we present all defaulters that have not appeared at this court in six pence apiece and those that have not appeared at this court nor the last we amerce them in two shillings apiece.

Also there is a paine layd at the last court of twenty shillings on Mr. Richard Whealler and we continue the same paine for not appearing to do his fealty.

Also there is a paine last layd at the last court of twenty shillings on Mr. Plimley and we continue the same paine for not appearing to do his fealty.

Also there is a paine last layd at the last court of ten shillings on Jermyn Grove esq. and we continue the same paine for not appearing to do his fealty.

Signed by all jurors

View of Frankpledge - 13 October 1747

To this court came Richard Wheeler and paid his relief, did his fealty to the Lord of this manor for a messuage and lands called Cutts within the manor aforesaid whereof his late father dyed seized.

We present all defaulters that have not appeared at this court in one shilling apiece and those that have not appeared at this court nor the last we amerce them in two shillings apiece.

Also there was a paine layd upon Mr. Plimley at the last court of twenty shillings for not appearing to do his fealty and we continue the same paine

Also there was a paine layd at the last court of ten shillings on Jermyn Grove esq. and keep the same paine if he does not appear at the next court to do his fealty.

Also we present James Nicholls to serve the offices of Constable for the year ensuing, who at this court was sworn into office accordingly.

View of Frankpledge - 23 October 1750

To this court came John Jasper and did his fealty to the Lord for lands and tenements called Mayhouse within the manor and descended to him on the death of Walter Jasper his late father.

At this court Edward Lowe came and did his fealty to the Lord for two messuages and diverse lands called Ffen Green and Platters and certain lands called Colehill within this manor which he holds by free deed and the yearly chief rent of twelve pounds for Platters and three shillings and four pence for Colehill, which premises descended to him on the death of his father John Lowe.

We present Edward Lowe, petty constable for the year ensuing . Sworn in court.

View of Frankpledge - 2 October 1753

The jury on their oath present that Simon Jennings who held of the Lord of this manor two third parts undivided of a messuage or tenement with divers lands to the same belonging called Nether Hollies

within this manor by the yearly rent of eleven pence farthing, herriot, relief, suit of court, and fealty, died since the last court, upon which death there happened to the Lord a herriot being the best beast or good for which the Lord seized a bullock, and that the said Simon Jennings by his will gave the premises to Ann Jennings his widow for her life, who being present in court paid eleven pence farthing for a relief and did her fealty.

Also that the said Simon Jennings died seized of two third parts undivided of a messuage aforementioned called Titterford with divers lands thereto belonging within this manor which he held freely by deed by the yearly rent of thirteen shillings and four pence, being two third parts of the rent of twenty shillings and herriot, viz. the best beast, whereupon there happened to the Lord a herriot for which the Lord seized a black gelding.

They also present that Ann Wickes, spinster, who held of the Lord of this manor a messuage or tenement and lands thereto belonging within this manor called Dods, by the yearly rent of one shilling and one half penny, fealty, suit of course and herriot when the same shall happen, being the best beast or good, died thereof seized since the last court whereupon there happened to the Lord a herriot for which the Lord is satisfied and that John Lowe is nephew and heir of the said Ann Wickes and ought to pay his relief and do his fealty and we lay a pain of 39s 11d upon the said John Lowe if he does not appear at the next court and pay his relief and do his fealty.

Item. We present Mr Jacob Stoakes to serve the office of Petty Constable for the manor house near to the Hadleys for the year ensuing. .

Alveley Suit Roll

The Lord of the manor kept a record of all those who owed suit to him on the Suit Roll. Several of these documents are among the Manor Court Rolls.

The Suit Roll for Alveley 1753 - 1761

Jermyn Grove Esq., John Benion, John Hollins, Henry Jermyn Grove Esq., Thomas Davis, William Grove, Joanna Lowe, widow, John Lowe of Cooks Cross, Francis Watmore, William Brook (crossed out), Edward Wilcox, James Nicholls, Simon Jennings, widow (crossed out), Richard Humphries, Widow Longmore (crossed out), Corbett Hale, gent, William Cooksey, The Rev'd Mr John Reynoles, Widow Stockall (crossed out) pauper, dead, Thomas Hughes, William Gill, Richard Pearson (crossed out), John Reynolds, poor, William Snipson, Samuel Hale, William Hide's widow, Joseph Scriven, William Palmer, John Hide (crossed out), George Colley Gent, John Tunnington, John Glaze, William Richards (erased), Sarah Flewett, Francis Chidley, old and lame, Richard Beech, Thomas Chidley, John Hide (crossed out) dead, John Collins, Edward Lewis, als Robin Hood, John Goodman, John Chidley of the Butts, Thomas Richards, Humphrey Goodman, John Instance, Richard Morris, William Rogers, dead (crossed out), John Fownes, William Jordan, Wheelwright, Gerrard Longmore, John Hide (crossed out), John Milward, Amos Weaver, gone, John Hide (crossed out), John Humphries, Hattam Windle, gent, John Skelding (crossed out), William Instance, Thomas Wilcox, John Horn, John Longmore, Edward Southern, John Green, sen, Edward Cardale, Thomas Gill, Richard Cock, Benjamin Perkes, Widow Jasper, William Burgess, John Hide, (crossed out) gone, John Teverill, Tho's Stockall, Thomas Jorden the younger, Thomas Scriven sen., William Dawe??? (erased), John Hayward, Thomas Scriven jun., George Binge, Benjamin Goodman, William Crow of the Lowe, William Wick, John Hardwick, dead (crossed out), Thomas Milward, John Hatton, John Wall, Edw'd Oakley of Hillhouse, Edward Taylor, John (crossed out), William Doolittle, Widow Hubball, Jane Wood, widow, William Johnson als Wigley, William Southall (crossed out) gone, Anne Wilkes (crossed out) dead, John Gill (crossed out), John Hide, John Tomkis (crossed out), John Perkes (crossed out), William Jordan, wheelwright (crossed out), Benjamin Child, William Oliver, gone, John Jordan, John Cock, James Weaver, John Gravenor, Edward Veal, Thomas Cock, Edward Fox, Will'm Arden of the High House, Thomas Booth, poor and blind, dead (crossed out), Michael Lawley William Cock, James Pinches, Samuel Bennett Thomas Dovey, John Hollins

View of Frankpledge - 13 October 1755

We continue the pain of 39s. 11d. laid upon John Lowe at the last court holden for this manor if he does not appear at the next court to be holden for this manor and pay his relief and do his fealty for Dods tenement.

We also present that Ann Richards, widow, who held of the lord of this manor a tenement in Alveley, formerly Thomas Dovey's and late Wannestery ??? by the yearly rent of two shillings and herriot being the best beast or best good, relief, suit of court and fealty, died since the last court. And that Luke Nicholls by his will gave the same to the said Anne Richards for her life and afterwards gave one tenement part thereof to his granddaughter Hannah who married with John Wall. And another tenement other part thereof to William Richards one of the sons of the said Anne Richards. And another tenement other part thereof to Thomas Richards youngest son of the said Anne Richards. And that the said Anne Wall, William Richards and Thomas Richards are tenants to the Lord for the same and as such ought to do their fealty and pay a relief and that Thomas Richards being present in court did his fealty and we lay a pain of 39s. 11d. on William Richards if he does not appear at the next court and pay his relief and do his fealty. And the fealty of Hannah Wall was ?? being under court ??.

John Hayward appeared and did his fealty for an estate called the Over Hollies purchased of Jermyn Grove, late Browns and paid his relief being thirteen ? pence halfpenny.

We also present that Edward Lowe, gent, who held of the Lord of this manor a nook of land at Nether Hollies within this manor by the yearly rent of three shillings and four pence, herriot, relief, suit of court and fealty, died since the last court whereupon there happened to the Lord a herriot of the best beast or best good for which the Lord is not yet satisfied and that Joanna Lowe, his widow, holds the same for her life and ought to pay a relief and do her fealty. And we lay a pain of 39s. 11d upon the said Joanna Lowe if she does not appear at the next court Baron to be holden for this manor and pay her relief and do her fealty.

We also present that Edward Lowe, gent, who held of the Lord of this manor a messuage called Platters by the yearly rent of one shilling and one shilling in the name ? of a herriot, died since the last court.

We also find that the footway called the Lea Lane, leading from Cookes Cross to Alveley, is very much out of repair and ought to be held in repair by John Lowe and we lay a pain of ten shillings upon the said John Lowe if he does not repair the same within two months.

View of Frankpledge - 13 October 1757

We present James Nicholls to serve the office of Petty Constable for ye year ensuing for Lawley farme for William Roger by and with ye consent of ye jurymen.

We present John Lowe that he amends the lane from Cooks Cross to the Lea Bridge before the twenty fourth day of August next upon paine of 39s. 11d.

We present that Joanna Lowe, widow, that she appears at the next court to pay the herriot and relief and do her fealty upon paine of 39s. 11d.

We continue a pain that was laid at the last court on William Richards of 39s. 11d. that he appears at the next court to do his fealty

The Lord of the manor also kept a record of the fines which were owed to him from the manor court.

The Manor of Alveley in the County of Salop

An estreat of the amerciaments and forfeitures presented, taxed, imposed and offered at the Court Leet and Court Baron of Lancelot Lee esquire, Lord of the manor aforesaid, there holden for the same manor, the sixteenth day of October, One Thousand Seven Hundred and fifty eight before Rupert Dovey, gentleman, Steward of the said manor.

For not doing suit of court six pence each. John Milward 6d John Hatton 6d John Gill 6d William Oliver

6d John Gravenor 6d Michael Lawley 6d John Lowe of Cooks Cross 6d John Hide 6d Edward Cardale 6d Mathew Burgess 6d Thomas Stockall 6d William Crow of the Lowe 6d Thomas Milward 6d William Grove 6d

For not doing suit of court at the last two courts William Palmer 1s Edward Fflewett 1s John Goodman 1s William Jordan 1s Wheelwright John Skelding 1s John Greech 1s Jasper, widow 1s Edward Oakley 1s Jane Wood, widow 1s John Cock 1s William Arden 1s Thomas Dovey 1s Ffrancis Chidley 1s Gerrard Longmore 1s Hattam Windle, gent. 1s John Longmore 1s Edward Taylor 1s James Wiggan 1s Edward Veal 1s Samuel Bennett 1s John Hollins 1s Ffrancis Watmore 1s William Snibson 1s George Colley, gent. 1s William Richards 1s Jermyn Grove esq. 1s Henry Jermyn Grove esq. 1s William Bennett 1s Corbett Hale, gent 1s The Rev. Mr. John Reynolds 1s Thomas Hughes 1s Samuel Hale 1s

For Continuing Cottages on the Waste and within this manor, one shilling each
James Nicholls 1s William Jordan 1s Rachel Millard 1s William Snibson 1s

For continuing encroachments within this manor sixpence each
Richard Beech of Turley 6d John Teverall 6d John Jordan 6d John Doolittle 6d

For continuing cottages not upon the waste and within this manor sixpence apiece
William Gill 6d Edward Ffox 6d Thomas Milward 6d John Milward 6d William Instance 6d William Jordan 6d

Of John Lowe for not repairing the road from Cooks Cross to the Lea bridge within the manor thirty nine shillings eleven pence 39s11d

Of William Richards for not appearing to do his fealty for a tenement in Alveley, late Luke Nechells, thirty nine shillings and eleven pence 39s11d.

You are hereby required to remand and receive the several sums of money above mentioned of and from the several persons on whom the same are respectively imposed for the use of the Lord of the said manor. And if any of them refuse to make payment thereof you are hereby required to levy the same by distress on their goods. Given under my hand and seal the fourth day of May in the year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Fifty Nine.

View of Frankpledge - 16 October 1758

The manor of Alveley, to wit :- The View of Frankpledge with the Court Baron of Lancelot Lee esq. Lord of the manor afores'd there holden for the same manor the sixteenth day of October in the thirty second year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George the 2nd, by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain and in the year of our Lord 1758 before Rupert Dovey, gent, steward there.

Essoigns appear by the Suit Roll.

Jurors as well for our Sovereign Lord the King as the Lord of the Manor. Mr. John Hayward, James Nicholls, John Doolittle, William Instance, John Teverills, Thomas Davis, Richard Morris, John Wall, Richard Humphries, William Cooksey, Thomas Jordan Jun., Joseph Scriven, John Jordan

Item. We present James Nickollls, William Jordan, Rachel Mallard, William Snibson for continuing cottages on the waste within this manor, we amerce them in one shilling apiece.

Item. We present William Gill, Ed. Ffox, Thomas Millard, John Millard, William Instons, William Jordan, for continuing cottages but not upon the waste, within this manor, and amerce them in sixpence apiece.

Item. We present Richard Beach of Turley, John Teverill, John Jordan, John Doolittle for continuing encroachments upon the waste within this manor and amerce them in 6 pence apiece.

Item. We present all those who have made defaults and have not appeared at this court, we amerce them sixpence each and those that have not appeared at this court nor the last in one shilling each.

We present John Low for encroachments on ye waste at Dods Green

We present Richard Morris , sworn, to serve ye office of Petty Constable for ye year ensuing for the house where he dwells by and with the consent and order of ye jury and we order that he take his oath here before ye Steward or before one of his majesties justices of ye peace for ye County of Salop within fourteen days on pain of forfeiting five pounds to ye Lord of ye manor.

We find that John Low hasn't repaired the road from Cooks Cross to the Lea Bridge according to ye last presentment whereby the pain of 39 shillings and 11d. layd upon him at the last court , his forfeiture to ye lord of ye manor and we further lay the pain of 39 shillings and 11d upon him if ye above road be not repaired on or before th 24th. day of August next.

We continue the pain of 39shillings and 11d. layd upon him at the last court upon William Richards that he appears at court to do his fealty.

Joanna Lowe, widow, appeared at this court and did her fealty for an estate called the Nether Hollies and paid her Relief being three shillings and four pence.

Alveley - Surrender of Lakehouse 1758. The manor of Alveley, otherwise Turley, in the County of Salop.

Be it remembered that upon the twenty second day of June in the year of our Lord 1758 Thomas Skelding, one of the customary tenants of the said manor came before Lancelot Lee esq. Lord of the said manor, in his own proper person, And did surrender by the Rod into the hands of the said Lord, According to the Custom of the manor aforesaid, one Customary or Copyhold messuage and half yardland called Lakehouse and Nomans Ground with the appurtances within the said manor, And also one toft and one nook of Customary or Copyhold land with the appurtances within the same manor called Gamons alias Eamons. To such persons or person and for such use and uses, intents and purposes as the said Thomas Skelding shall by his last Will and Testament in writing limit, devise, direct and appoint , And the premises remain in the Lords hands to be granted accordingly. Before me. Signed. Lancelot Lee, Thomas Skelding.

View of Frankpledge - 23 October 1759

The manor of Alveley, to wit :- The View of Frankpledge with the Court Baron of Lancelot Lee esq. Lord of the manor afores'd there holden for the same manor the twenty third day of October in the thirty third year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George the 2nd, by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain and in the year of our Lord 1759 before Daniel Clarke, gent, steward there.

Essoigns appear by the Suit Roll.

Jurors as well for our Sovereign Lord the King as the Lord of the Manor. Mr. John Hayward, James Nicolls, John Doolittle, Thomas Stockall, Richard Beech, William Oliver, John Hyde, Richard Humphreys, John Teverill, Thomas Jordan, John Humphreys, William Snibson, John Skelding

Item. We present Mr Joseph Ball, William Jordan, Rachel Mallard, William Snibson for continuing cottages on the waste within this manor, we amerce them in one shilling apiece.

Item. We present William Gill, Ed. Ffox, Thomas Milward, John Milward, William Instance and William Jordan, for continuing cottages but not upon the waste, within this manor, and amerce them in sixpence apiece.

Item. We present all persons that owe suit of service to this court and have this day made default in appearance and and amerce them in six pence and all persons who have not appeared at this court nor the last in one shilling each.

We present Michaell Lawly for continuing in a cottage on the waste and amerce him in one shilling.

We present Thomas Skelding, John Low, William Cucsey, John Milward for continuing encroachments on ye waste in this manor and amerce them in six pence.

Item. We present Joseph Austin for a pigsty incroachment upon the waste in this manor and amerce him in two pence.

Item. We present the widow Wood in a defolt of not keeping a gate at the top of Crofelfield Lane and amerce her in ten shillings and six pence if a gate is not put up by the 23rd day of November next.

Item. We find that John Lowe has repaired the road for which he was conditionally amerced the last court and that he is in consequence discharged of such amercement.

Item. We elect Richard Morris into the office of petty constable for the year ensuing, he being willing to again accept of such office.

View of Frankpledge - 26 October 1760

The manor of Alveley, to wit :- The View of Frankpledge with the Court Baron of Lancelot Lee esq. Lord of the manor afores'd there holden for the same manor the twenty sixth? day of October in the thirty fourth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George the 2nd, by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain, France and Ireland and in the year of our Lord 1760 before Daniel Clarke, gent, steward there.

Essoigns appear by the Suit Roll.

Jurors as well for our Sovereign Lord the King as the Lord of the Manor. Mr. John Hayward, Thomas Jordan, John Skelding, William Doolittle, Richard Beech, William Jordan, Thomas Stockall, John Palmer, William Arden, William Gill, John Hatton, John Teverill, William Wood

We present Mr Joseph Ball, William Jordan, Rachel Mallard, William Snibson for continuing cottages on the waste within this manor, we amerce them in one shilling apiece.

We present William Gill, Edward Ffox, Thomas Milward, John Milward, William Instance and William Jordan, for continuing cottages but not upon the waste, within this manor, and amerce them in sixpence apiece.

We present all persons that owe suit of service to this court and have this day made default in appearance and amerce them in six pence each and all persons who have not appeared at this court nor the last in one shilling each.

We present Michaell Lawly for continuing in a cottage on the waste within this manor and amerce him in one shilling.

We present John Skelding, John Low, William Cucsey, John Milward for continuing encroachments upon the waste in this manor and amerce them in six pence each.

We present Joseph Austin for a pigsty incroachment upon the waste in this manor and amerce him in two pence.

We present that John Doolittle who held of the Lord of this manor a messuage called Gillets within this manor by free deed at ye yearly rent of one shilling and two pence relief , being one years same rent, a herriot when same should happen being the best beast or best good and by fealty and suit of court, died thereof seized since the last court whereupon there happened to the Lord a herriot of a black mare as the best beast and for which the Lord has since been satisfied in lieu of the same by his son William Doolittle whom the jurors present is also the heir of his said father and that he hath done his fealty (sworn) and paid his relief of one shilling and two pence.

We find the widow Wood released from the conditional pain of ten shillings and six pence laid upon her at the last court in consequence of her having put up a gate at the top of Creswell ? Field Lane by the 23rd day of November last.

We present Daddle Brook Bridge to be broke down and we order that Richard Morris as surveyor of the highways do get the same sufficiently repaired in the space of fourteen days on pain of ten shillings as amercement on the same surveyor in case of his neglect therein.

We present the gate at the Paper Mill Brook and the fence there between Quatt to be out of repair and we order the same last mentioned surveyor to get the same sufficiently repaired before Xmas day next on pain of 3s 11d.

We present the said Richard Morris as constable in particular for not attending in such his office at the last court..... to keep the stocks sufficiently kept cleaned and in order and amerce him in the sum of one shilling and lay upon the constable for the year ensuing if he do not get the same stocks sufficiently cleaned and the whipping post and stocks properly removed and repaired in the space of thirty days a pain of ten shillings and six pence.

We elect Thomas Jordan for the year ensuing as petty constable for the said manor - for his own house, late W. Austins.

We present a stile at the bottom of the pleck near Daddle Brook to be out of repair and that John Lowe ought to repair the same and we lay a pain of ten shillings upon the said John Lowe if he does not repair the same sufficiently within the space of thirty days.

Signed by all jurors.

View of Frankpledge - 18 October 1762

The manor of Alveley, to wit :- The View of Frankpledge with the Court Baron of Lancelot Lee esq. Lord of the manor afores'd there holden for the same manor the Monday the eighteenth day of October in the second year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George the 3rd, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France and Ireland, King, defender of the faith and so forth and in the year of our Lord 1762 Before Daniel Clarke, Gentleman Steward there.

Essoigns appear by the Suit Roll.

Jurors as well for our Sovereign Lord the King as the Lord of the Manor. John Lowe, John Humphreys, Richard Morris, Richard Humphreys, Edward Veal, William Harding, John Ridley, William Doolittle, Richard Morris, John Veal, William Gill, Thomas Turner, John Palmer,

We present The Rev. Joseph Ball, William Jordan, Rachel Mallard, William Snibson for continuing cottages on the waste within this manor, we amerce them in one shilling apiece.

We present William Gill, Ed. Ffox, John Benion, John Milward, William Instance, William Jordan, for continuing cottages but not upon the waste, within this manor, and amerce them in sixpence apiece.

We present all persons who owe suit and serviceto this court and have this day made default in appearance and amerce them in six pence apiece and all persons that have not appeared at this court nor the last we amerce them in one shilling apiece.

We present Thomas Skelding, John Lowe, William Cuxsey and John Milward for continuing encroachments upon the waste within this manor and amerce them in 6 pence apiece.

We present Joseph Austin for a pigsty inroachment upon the waste within this manor and amerce him in two pence.

We also present Joanna Lowe, widow of Edward Lowe, gent deceased, who held of the Lord of this manor a nooke of land at Nether Hollies within this manor for the term of her life by the yearly rent of three shillings and four pence, heriot, relief, suit of court and fealty, died since the last court whereupon there happened to the Lord a herriot of one shilling only for which the Lord is not yet satisfied.

We also present that the said Joanna Lowe held of the Lord of this manor divers lands and tenements called the May House within this manor by free deed of the Lord of this manor at the yearly rent of one shilling ,herriot, suit of court and fealty.

We find John Lowe excused from the conditional pain of ten shillings laid upon him at the last court in consequence of him having repaired the stile near Daddle Brook within the time limited for that purpose.

We find John Horn excused from the conditional pain of ten shillings laid upon him at the last court in consequence of his having restored a certain footway and replaced certain stiles to their proper state within the time limited for that purpose.

We find Thomas Jordan excused from the conditional pain of ten shillings laid upon him at the last court in consequence of his having repaired his fence and unhung and removed a certain gate within the time limited for that purpose.

We find the widow Wood excused from the conditional pain of five shillings laid upon him at the last court in consequence of her having repaired her fence within the time limited for that purpose
 We present the lane leading from Coal Load Green to the Finger Post near Allum Bridge to be out of repair and we order Richard Morris as surveyor of the highways to get the same sufficiently repaired within the space of forty days on pain of two shillings as an amerciament on the same surveyor in case of his neglect herein.

We present the footway upon the top of the field next leading into the new tining to be out of repair and that the same ought to be repaired by William Crow and Thomas Turner and we lay a pain of five shillings upon each of them if the same is not sufficiently repaired within the space of forty days as an amerciament on each of them in case of their respective neglects herein.

We present a part of the road in Tucknell? Lane leading from the Lake House Green to the Paper Mill Brook and that the same therefore ought to be repaired accordingly.

We present John Horn for not scouring his water course through King? Field near Turley Green and amerce him in five shillings unless he scours the same within the space of twenty days.

We present and elect Benjamin Perks Petty Constable for ye year ensuing for the tenement he now lives in
 We present John Hayward for an encroachment upon the waste by building part of a dairy there and amerce him two pence.

Signed by all jurors.

The Bell Inn - a brief history. Tim White

The Bell Inn , a grade II listed building , has for nearly 350 years served the village and its community, but when was it built. A local story says that the Bell was originally a Priests House or Monks House., however there is no written evidence to support this theory. What is known is that the first licence was granted to the Bell in 1647, we can therefore perhaps assume that the building is either late 16th century or early 17th century in date. The fabric of the building has much stone which may have come from the church. Records indicate that in 1585 work was done to the church in rebuilding the lateral wall of the north aisle. In the courtyard between the Bell and the Malthouse are a number of rounded stones that probably formed the pillars each side of a door which supported one of the tympana which are built into the walls of the Bell. The fireplace between the bar and the lounge also includes stones more often found in a church than in a pub. Is the Bell built from the remains of a Saxon church or priests house which was on the site before St Marys church was built? Local tradition tells that Oliver Cromwell and his supporters stayed overnight at the Bell Inn during the Civil War, some say horses were stabled at the church, but again there is no documentary evidence to support this and it must therefore be treated as nothing more than a story until written evidence is found. Of equal interest is another story which relates to a tunnel that runs from the Bell to the church. After careful examination of the cellar I have found no disturbance of the cellar stonework which would give an indication of a tunnel or doorway, the cellar being the obvious place for a tunnel entrance. As mentioned before the Bell Inn is a Grade II listed building , the adjacent Malthouse and some of the garden wall are also listed and the following is the official schedule of the inn :-

Alveley No. 6 (The Bell Inn) II*

“House, now public house. Early C.17, incorporating late C12 stonework. Colour washed render over timber frame; gabled plain tile roof, brick end, ridge and rear lateral stacks, 3-unit plan. One storey and attic, 3-window range. Flat rendered arch over mid C18 fielded 6 panelled door. Flat rendered arch over late C19 cross window with shutter to centre, and canted bay window with glazing bar sashes to right; half dormer with late C19 three light casement. C19 lean-to and mid C20 flat roofed extension to rear. Interior: deeply chamfered ground floor beams and stop chamfered joints; open fireplace with chamfered bressummer to centre and C18 plank door adjoining stack; some exposed timber frame with wall bracing; trenced purlin roof with central raised cruck of very thin scanthing and curved wind braces to bay on right. The Bell Inn is notable for a very fine group of reset mid C12 sculptured stones in the style of the

Herefordshire School, and so the only known Shropshire example of the school style apart from Stottesdon. There are several interlace panels, some being in the form of an interwoven knot; near exterior wall has interlace panels finished in the form of a scaled body with a large dragon-like head. The panel set in the wall has a pair of figures each with arms raised across the chest - hand turned out in attitude of prayer, set within an arcade having simple flat capitals to pillars. Internal rear wall has panel depicting Sampson or Hercules and the lion which retains part of a moulded frame but the right half of the scene is lost. The adjoining panel depicts St Michael and the Devil, with a figure in flowing, fluted robes leaning over a serpent, the upper half having been lost. C20 stone fireplace to the left in the ground floor room has a panel depicting a figure with a fluted robe struggling through a tangle of interlaced foliage. The following buildings shall be included: Privy and attached walls to SE of No 6 (The Bell Inn). Privy and attached walls late C18/early C19, squared and roughly coursed sandstone. Privy has corrugated iron lean to roof and C20 door with lintel being a probable late C12 tympanum or lintel. Attached walls have rounded stone coping; east wall extends approx. 10m to north of privy (located in north east corner) and south wall extends approx. 43 m west of privy. Probably includes reset late C12 stonework. Outbuilding, probably a former malthouse. Late C18 squared and roughly coursed sandstone; gabled plain tiled roof; 2 storeys. West elevation of 2 window range has C19 segmented brick arches over C20 cross windows; 3 light first floor window. South elevation has outshut with 2 mid C19 two light casement with iron bars, to left of C18 segmented brick arch over doorway. First floor left doorway to south gable end. The interior has plain chamfered beams to ground floor; 4 bay trenched purlin roof with interrupted tie beam trusses and two trusses with curved principal rafters. Lean-to to north is remnant of part of building demolished in mid C20. Rebuilding features late C18/19 walls attached to north-east corner of squared and coursed sandstone with rounded stone coping. The walls to the west are late C18/ early C19 including reset mid C12 stonework. Squared and coursed sandstone walls extend approximately 10m. along the north side and 15m. along the west side. The walls, which complete the circuit, to the south and east, are much lower and have been rebuilt, the east wall having a reset mid C12 carved stone similar in style to those found in the Bell, having a pair of figures, each with arms raised across the chest and hands turned out in an attitude of prayer, set within an arcade having simple flat capitals to pillars.”

During my research into the history of the Bell it became evident quite early on that there were very few written documents that would have given assistance in detailing the history of the inn. Indeed the earliest document that I have been able to find is dated 15th September 1897, which forms part of the deeds to the building and shows the sale of the premises 100 years ago to the Worcestershire Brewing and Malting Co., Kidderminster. Examination of the “Return of Licensed Houses in the Petty Sessional Division of Bridgnorth” reveals that in 1896 the owner of the Bell Inn was Mr. Rowley of the Shakespeare Inn, Kidderminster, the occupier and manageress being Mary Jane Hermmings. In 1901 the owners were the Worcestershire Brewing and Malting Co. whose manager was William Bill. The above returns give details of any proceedings against the occupier which were several from 1851 to 1892:-

- 11 Sep. 1851 Disorderly house, Fined £2
- 22 Aug. 1857 Open during prohibited hours, Fined £2-11-6d with costs 8s-6d
- 17 Dec. 1870 Allowing gambling, Fined 10s. and costs 19s-4d
- 4 Feb. 1871 Allowing gambling, Fined £1 and costs 11s.
- 9 Jan. 1892 Selling adulterated whisky, Fined 10s and costs 19s

Perhaps the most well known landlords of modern times were Gilbert and Maggie Wood whose family have lived at the Bell Inn for close on 100 years, the present owner, Jean McSorley being a niece of Marjorie. The Woods moved into the Bell in the early 1900's and in 1933 the Bell closed to the public with the building being transformed for residential use. In the early 1970's Gilbert took the decision to reopen and a toilet block was added to the side of the building. What had been the gardens and the orchard was converted into a car park. The rear of the orchard was sold for development and Holmes Orchard was built. The inside of the building has also undergone considerable change, the upstairs

consists of four bedrooms and a bathroom, whilst the ground floor offers a bar and two lounges. Up to the 1930's the bar was to be found in the small lounge to the left of the entrance door. When the inn reopened in 1971 Gilbert Wood constructed a new bar in the middle lounge. The panelling on the front of the bar is well worth inspection. I have heard a story that describes how Gilbert obtained the panelling; apparently a local villager was trying to chop firewood but was having difficulty due to the hardness of the wood. Gilbert saw that it was old panelling that was being chopped up and immediately offered the person an exchange for firewood and built the bar from the panelling. This is not true! The real story is that Mrs Thompson of Coton Hall had obtained the panelling from the chapel at Goodrich Castle and Gilbert bought the panelling from her. My most recent "discovery" is an oil painting owned by Alec Breakwell of Highley. The painting is of his mother and aunt, Sarah and Ada Evans, both of whom were born at the Bell and cousins of Gilbert Wood, which was painted at the Bell about 1912 showing the two as very small children. In January 1996 the inn closed to the public, although the licence is retained by the present owner, and in August this year the Historical Society held an exhibition at the Bell, a perfect setting for displaying the history of the village.

The Malt House

I have often heard the Malthouse referred to as the Bell Room, in fact the building comprises of three separate rooms. A store room in the lower courtyard joins the upper and lower function rooms, access to the upper room is by way of a set of steps adjacent to the original entrance to the inn. The entrance to the lower room has at some time changed position, the present entrance is to the left of the original entrance, the blocked up doorway can still be seen. It is said that the entrance door came from Coton Lodge near Coton Hall. The construction of the Malthouse is most interesting. If one views the building from the Bell Lane the joint where an extension has been added to the building is quite obvious to the naked eye. The masonry used in the original part of the building is of a quite rough construction, whereas the later addition must have been constructed by more competent builders. Undoubtedly the Malthouse must have been used for brewing beer etc. and with the store room adjacent one can imagine the whole inn was quite self contained. It is worth noting that during the war, when building materials were quite scarce, the store room roof section was lowered and a flat roof added. One further note of interest is that the original Bell Inn sign used to be located on the side of the Malthouse overhanging into Bell Lane. The sign, I am told by a number of elderly residents, made an ideal target for snowballs in the winter time.

The Stables

Next to the courtyard stands what was the stables. They were probably built during the 1800's with an upper floor being added some time later. The upper rooms have been used in various ways, from a village function room to an upholsterers workshop and a hairdressers salon. The ground floor section, after being used as a stables, was turned into a pigsty. John Weir of Cooks Cross tells, "at the Bell Inn they used to keep a lot of pigs, but also they used to make a lot of cider for the farmers. The local farmers would bring their fruit which was put into the big press out in the yard. All the pulp was thrown into the orchard at the rear of the old stables and the pigs would eat it and get very drunk."

The history of the Bell Inn has only been looked at very briefly. Further research is to be carried out in the next twelve months on the construction of the Inn with a possible conservation project on the carved stones. One other thing that I would like to explore is whether the Bell consists of an original ancient building, which incorporates all the Norman carved stones, and a later extension of the lounge next to the modern toilet block. I will possibly have the answer next year.

The Bell Stones - an update. Tim White

In my report on the Bell Stones, printed in the 1995 Transactions, I gave a brief history and description of these twelfth century carvings. Since my report concern has been expressed about the condition of some

of the stones. In order to consider conservation, and with the support of the owner, we contacted English Heritage for guidance on this matter. English Heritage gave details of the set procedure. Before any work planning permission must be sought from the parish and district councils who would in turn contact English Heritage and the County Archaeologist for their guidance. Before any of the above can be actioned a report has to be prepared and submitted with the planning application. With English Heritage recommendation a conservation consultant visited the Bell in July this year in order to prepare a report on the feasibility of cleaning and conservation treatment of some of the more "at risk" stones. It is anticipated that the report should be ready towards the end of this year and hopefully in 1997 a planning application can be submitted.

The Alveley Tunnels. Tim White

Does anyone know if the Alveley Tunnels really exist?

There are many local legends of tunnels leading from various buildings but to my knowledge nobody has actually seen them. I have heard of rumours of tunnels leading from Hall Close Farm to the Church, from Elm Cottage to the Church, from the Bell Inn to the Church, and perhaps the hardest to believe of them all, a tunnel leading from Church House to Coton Hall and then on to the Dumballs. One local resident told me that in the cellar of Church House there are a number of hooks set into the wall where Oliver Cromwell's horses were tethered before they were taken through the tunnel. This tunnel is supposed to follow a line under Honeybourne Road and then follow the pathway at the bottom of Romsley View, under Daddlebrook and then between Birch Grove and Peacock Hill through to Cooks Cross and then presumably under the fields to Coton. Some years ago the pathway between Birch Grove and Peacock Hill, just after Daddlebrook, subsided. People believed that it was the tunnel caving in at this point. As detailed in my history of the Bell Inn there is nothing in the cellar to indicate the possible existence of a tunnel. This year I talked to Mr Alec Breakwell who now lives in Highley, but lived at Elm Cottage for a number of years. He said that, to his knowledge, there was no tunnel from Elm Cottage, indeed the cellar was so often flooded it was sometimes impossible to see the floor and part of the walls. Can any reader give more information on these or any other tunnels. Perhaps the only tunnels that do exist are the ones cut by the miners for the Alveley Colliery.....!!!

The Buttercross. Tim White

Our Transactions of 1995 gave a very brief description of the Buttercross (see page 104). Since that article was published many people have asked me if we could include in this years Transactions more details of this ancient monument. Although very little is known about the Buttercross including its purpose we are able to give a detailed description from a report prepared in 1991. At that time the Parish Council became concerned about the condition of the monument and the deterioration it had suffered due to the weather. A report and repair schedule was prepared by Richard Marsh Conservation and in 1992 conservation work was carried out on behalf of the Parish Council. The report, copied below, gives new credence to the theory that the Buttercross was at sometime moved to its present site from some other location, but from where?

The Buttercross is sited approximately one mile from the village of Alveley on what is now a sharp bend in a narrow road. Overgrown tracks leading northwards into fields and eastwards to a farm suggest an earlier crossroads. The cross stands on the northern verge of the road facing east - west. The monument consists of a solid head and shaft in one stone and a separate circular base stone, in the centre of which is a square cut hole to accommodate the shaft of the cross. The base stone is supported underneath on irregular sized stones of considerable archaeological importance, the largest of which is the head and neck of another roughly hewn cross. The two elements of the monument are carved from a pink/red sandstone similar to the stone used in the construction of the Medieval farm buildings in Alveley. From my observations I presume the monument to be of local origin, indeed a disused quarry, reputed to be

medieval, can be found lying a field away to the south of the cross. The cross head contains a single 'Maltese' cross on both west and east faces. The carving of the cross design reads more clearly on the exposed west face where an inscribed border to the design can be clearly seen. This west facing side of the cross has approximately a 90% covering of green/grey lichen. The stone's surface on the more sheltered east face is smoothly worn and the design reads less clearly, and there is less lichen. This pattern of erosion is contrary to what I would expect to find, and may suggest that the cross has been moved from an earlier site at some time. The north and south sides of the cross head are plain, tapering towards the top. A deep pocket of decay can be found on the lower north edge of the east face. There are stress cracks radiating from the edge of the damaged area and the surrounding stone sounds hollow. This is a very important and vulnerable area being so close to the cross head design. The laminating process of decay must be prevented from spreading. The shaft is rectangular in section with chamfered corners. There is no evidence of any decoration and the surface of the stone on all four sides is plain. Where the base of the shaft extends into the hole of the base stone the surface of the stone has been roughly hewn with a pitcher. The east face of the shaft is generally in good order but with a considerable area of vertical cracking on the north chamfered edge. The stone behind these cracks is hollow and this decay of the substrate extends to the centre of the shaft where a sizeable area of laminating skin is now vulnerable to further damage and loss. There is approximately a 40% covering of lichen, mostly yellow. There is a sixteenth century graffiti at the bottom in the form of an initial T and two W's of the period, one above the other. Some modern, crude markings and initials can be found below the cross head on this face., fortunately most of these markings being scrapings in the lichen rather than cut into the stone. The lower half of the west face of the shaft is in good condition and the stone's surface is liberally covered with lichen. Problems of decay occur from half way up the shaft to just below the cross head where most of the stone's surface sounds hollow and has laminated from the substrate. It is important that this erosion is prevented from spreading further into the head of the cross. There is a large area of spalled stone now missing from this hollowed surface just below the cross head and forming the upper north west edge of the shaft. This area of loss has been repaired and some mortar still remains. The north face of the shaft is the most sheltered and the symptoms of sandstone decay are characteristically at their worst, as opposed to more general weathering on other more exposed faces. Most of the stone's surface on the upper section of the shaft has separated from the substrate and stress cracks within this skin are noted on both east and west corners. If the strength of the skin fails on the corners considerable areas of the flat surfaces will be lost. An area of the surface is already missing in the upper centre region of this face immediately below the neck of the cross head. This area of loss is linked to the deep pocket of decay noted on the lower north-east edge of the head's eastern face. The south face has been subjected to a more general and even weathering pattern. Its condition is good but some minor cracking is occurring to the eastern chamfered edge. The base stone is a single stone that has a diameter approximately 1m 30cm. It has a rounded sloping top but the underside appears flat. A square section hole, larger than the shaft of the cross, has been cut in the centre and presumably passes right through the base stone. The origin of this stone is unclear. It may form the original seating for a cross, but the size of the hole suggests it was not designed for the present cross. It may have been meant for the cross of which the fragments lie under the base stone. The condition of the base stone is fair but some minor supporting mortar repairs are required to the edges of the centre hole. An Ordnance Survey benchmark is noted carved into the base at the foot of the shaft on the east face. The metal plate and pin marking the exact point is now missing. This can be dated to the 1850's.

The supporting stones cannot be recorded without an archaeological survey, but one at least clearly represents a crudely and possibly unfinished cross head with a short section of the broken shaft attached. Other stones may be fragments of the cross shaft. The fact that the Buttercross is resting on these stone fragments is further evidence that the cross has been moved from its original site at an earlier date.

Evacuee in Alveley.

In September this year Mr William Poland of Merseyside wrote to Rev. Bill Pryce and the editor of the

Parish Magazine requesting that parishioners remember in their prayers Winifred Gittins, nee France, who had died in November 1995. Mr Poland was an evacuee from Liverpool in 1939 and has given permission to his memories of his time in Alveley as an evacuee during the war.

“When I first arrived in Alveley in 1939 Winifred’s husband, Jenner, picked me and another boy to be their evacuees, (the other boy returned home before Christmas), they lived in Lowe Lane at that time. I was welcomed into their home on a “you be good and we’ll get along fine” basis. I was not always good but we did get along fine and for the next two and a half years I was cared for as if I had been their own son.

They had no children of their own and perhaps we filled a gap. There were a lot of teething troubles to iron out before we (I) settled down. My feeble attempts to chop wood, wash dishes, light a fire and make a pot of tea, none of which I had ever had to do at home, were patiently encouraged until I got it right, and understood that, in the country, everybody had to pull his weight.

After I had passed the “11 plus” exam but been refused a place at Bridgnorth Grammar because I was a non-resident it was Winifred who bucked me up, just as any mother would do for her own son. While neither Winifred or Jenner were ardent churchgoers they made sure I got there on time every Sunday. If I was lucky the resident organist, who lived in Kidderminster, would give me a lift in his Morris Minor. (For the record choirboys were paid one old penny for service attendances, and two pence for choir practices, paid after the service... which ensured that we turned up for it !).

I was not allowed to miss any of the practical side of life either, fruit-picking, pea-picking, potato-picking, hay-making, even elementary back-breaking gardening became part of my education. Winifred was always there to clean up the cuts and bruises, dig out the thistles and send me back into the fray. Any worries my parents may have had, when they were able to visit me for the first time, were soon dispelled when they saw how fit, healthy and happy I was. There was not, to my knowledge, one case of ill-treatment or abuse of any of the evacuees in Alveley.

As the bombing of Liverpool petered out, my parents decided that I should return home, and for me that was the end of the most exiting and enjoyable times of my life. When the time came for me to return home I promised to write regularly, but with the passing of time, we eventually lost touch.

It was almost 30 years before I returned to Alveley in the 1970’s, by this time I had a family of my own, a daughter and son, and enough money to buy our first car. On arriving in Alveley I enquired at the village Post Office and found that Winifred had moved back into the village after having lost her husband. After being given directions to where Winifred lived I set off to visit her. When I knocked at her door I was in a complete state of “funk”. I wondered if she would remember me, would accept me.... she did both. That was a most wonderful day for me. My late wife and Winifred became the best of friends, which was a bonus to me and helped us to maintain our friendship.

By now, of course, I was allowed to call her ‘Win’ and we would spend many hours going over the past, filling in the gaps. I think she was rather proud that her ‘evacuee’ had remembered her and thought enough of her to visit. But time takes its toll, as they say, and as she got older Win began to ail. She was taken into hospital and while I was repeatedly told by nursing staff that she was ‘comfortable’, she was gradually passing away. She went before I was able to get to see her for the last time, but as you can see I still have my memories and will always treasure that friendship.”

In addition to the above letter William Poland has sent further details and memories of our village in the early days of the war. He continues.....

In answer to your request for further details I am able to offer a few items which may be of interest to you and your readers, but I should point out that they will not be in any particular order and may have to be researched for substantiation. Unfortunately I do not have any photographs of those times.... photography was expensive, and there did not seem to be cameras around. In addition, taking photographs was looked on with suspicion by those in authority.

However, the evacuees who arrived in Alveley on the Saturday afternoon of the 2nd. of September, (the

day before the declaration of war), must have numbered between 40 and 60, since two coaches were used to take us from Bridgnorth to the village. We were herded into the Village Hall where local adults looked us over and made their choice, first come, first served. Although I and another boy were the last to be chosen (the shame of it) we were among the luckiest.

All the evacuees were from the same school and must have been at least seven years old. Some months later families from Birmingham arrived in and around the village but I don't know if they were official evacuees or people who had just decided to get away from the bombing. The bombing of Birmingham could be heard and seen from the village, a dull red glow would linger long after the bombers had gone. Most of the evacuees lived in the village but I lived in Lowe Lane and had to walk to and from school, quite a distance for one brought up in a town. The house was owned by an elderly couple from Birmingham who also owned the house next door and moved into that one later on a permanent basis, to escape the bombing.

We had no flush toilet, used an oil lamp, and drew our water from a well. Rabbits formed a large part of our staple diet, but one day a foolish pheasant decided to land in our garden and Winnies's husband Jenner despatched it with his catapult. Jenner had left the land to work in the pit and during the whole time I was with them he worked the afternoon shift. His stories of coal-mining put me off becoming a Bevan boy. The winter of '39 was a very bad one. I recall the top road in to the village being blocked by over head-high snow drifts. This has probably happened since, but '39 like '45 was bad.

One of the evacuees who was staying with the Giles', behind the Roundhouse, really took to the country life and could do any job on the farm. He became adept at catching and skinning moles which gave him some additional pocket money, the skins fetched sixpence each. He was killed in Italy during the last few days of the war.

During our first week in the village the whole school, locals and evacuees, were taken to Bridgnorth in coaches to see a propaganda film. It was called, "The Lion Has Wings" and told the story about how the country was building planes to fight the war. I remember feeling very patriotic after seeing it. An afternoon visit to the cinema in Kidderminster meant missing the last twenty minutes of a film in order to see the last bus back.

The France family lived in the Old Vicarage across from the 'Shoes' and, on occasion, I would spend the night there. I recall one summer night when two miners, watched by most of the villagers, had a fist fight outside the 'Shoes'. The village Bobby had been sent for, his station was by the main road, but by the time he had pushed his bike to the top of the brew, having been spotted, the fight had been called off and the street cleared.

The L.D.V. (later the Home Guard) used a field beside the Squirrel for their parades and got some 'stick' from us kids. I have always believed that their chasing of us kept them fit. The Hunt, also, used to meet outside the Squirrel, but wouldn't let us follow them.

The Severn was used by German bombers, on moonlit nights, to guide them towards Liverpool. We knew that after their droning overhead for what seemed like hours we would hear, the next day, about the damage they had caused. The morning after the two bombs, small ones, had fallen near the village, the one near Evans' house had failed to explode. The army arrived, filled in the crater with sand bags and either detonated it or waited til it went off. It exploded the same morning. The bomb that landed at Birdsgreen did explode and it was rumoured that a farmer was carrying an oil lamp to one of his cowsheds... no one was hurt.

One day an RAF training plane crashed in a field behind the Roundhouse. I recall that the engine had buried itself about four feet down and the two wheels were on either side of the field. The pilot was killed in the crash.

I don't know if rabbits are still classed as food these days but when the crops were being cut both adults and kids would gather round what was left of the uncut wheat etc. As the tractor cut into it we waited, with sticks and guns, for the rabbits to emerge, then it was everyone for himself. The wonder was that no one was ever shot.... although now I come to think of it I believe someone was once.

The major issue at that time, the war, only briefly touched the lives of the children, both local and evacuees. Life seemed to be more about adjusting, to each other, and when that had been achieved to get

as much excitement out of life as we could.

Whenever I was taken to the village to visit Win's parents I was allowed to join groups of lads out for adventure, roaming over the landscape from Hampton Loade to Arley and other points east and west. The local quarry was one point of excitement, to get caught down the quarry by a rival gang meant having rocks of all shapes and sizes dumped on one. Dangerous, but fun.

I do recall a large plane landing somewhere between Alveley and Hampton Loade, just off the main road. By the time we, us kids, discovered it, it was empty of crew or cargo, and had no inner fittings, just a shell, even we couldn't find anything about it.

Mr. Pye, the headmaster at that time, was well liked by all the kids. Because the school was overcrowded he set up a room in the tower for a group of brighter pupils, it took me a while to get there, but I was very proud of myself when I did. We also had a Miss Williams who had come from Wales and who made my life something of a misery. Ms. Fooks, from the Wirral maintained that she was a music teacher and was convinced that music would soothe our savage breasts.... fools rush in.... But, all in all, schooldays in Alveley were among my happiest.

Nicknames. Alwyn Potter

In the last two years the Historical Society has been studying the history of the village this century. Throughout all our researches an interesting phenomenon has emerged which shows Alveley as a breeding ground of strange and comical nicknames. Whether this is because it was a close-knit village society where everyone knew each other, their successes and failures, their foibles and families is a matter for conjecture, but there is certainly a very long list of them. Sometimes nicknames are handed down the generations. Alwyn Potter has listed those nicknames which she has heard and we would be interested to find any more. We would also be interested to find out how some of the more obscure nicknames came about and maybe an article will appear next year if enough information can be gathered.

Here is the list so far:-

Musty France = George France; Knocky = Enoch France; Reverent = William France; Stubbs = Jim Jones; Nee Nee = Ern Evans Mike France; Porky = A.Wright; Currants = Herb Richards; Ronky = A.Scriven; EPH = Arthur Richards; Gedrick = S.Scriven; Duckman = Herb Richards; Dooble = F.Scriven; Sankey = T.Yeomans; Tany Evans; Dines = S.France; Fatty = Ted France; Dickster = Jim Garbett; Cracker = Ted Garbett; Gudgeon = Fred Parry; Johnno = J.Jones; Buck = W.Jones; Spug = C.Scriven; Noah = A.Davies; Gampus = B.Richards; Tittlebut = A.Nicholls; Sloper = H.Hunt; Brickly = W.Evans; Tightly = W.Scriven; Ruffy = W.Painter; Potter = A.Bint; Tenbury = Jack Knowles; Lang = G.Handley; Masher = D.Massey; Hootie = H.Norgrove; Wag = Charley Knowles; Deemer = Alf Head; Beckett = Stan Link; Blackbird Scriven; Chitnum = Geoff Scriven; Jimmy Honk Konk; Hago Knowles; Sausage Scriven; Whopper = Charlie Evans; Badger Davis; Tickler = George Evans; Flenner = Miss Wood; Nobbler = Chad Norgrove

One nickname I have been told the origin of is for Cecil Link who was called Two Foot because he was quite small in stature, hence Two Foot Link !!

The Show Scene. Tim White

In the summer of this year whilst browsing through a book shop in Bridgnorth I came across a copy of "the Shropshire Magazine" dated May 1950, Issue No.1, priced 1s. On page six is an article entitled "The Alveley Name Again", it is well worth reprinting the article.

For many years before the war cattle with names prefixed by "Alveley" gained championships at shows up and down the country. They were bred by Mr. Simpson Williamson, a great exponent of Shorthorn dairy cattle and whose experience was much in demand for show judging. Mr. Simpson Williamson

retired just after the war and his son Mr."Billy" Williamson succeeded him at Greenhouse , the pleasant old farmhouse which is seen with its fine dovecote on the left of the Bridgnorth to Kidderminster road, two miles beyond Quatt.

Billy is showing very clear signs that he is not only following in the footsteps of his distinguished father, but is going to enhance the Williamson name. At the Crewe Association of Shorthorn Breeders annual show and sale he gained first and champion with "Churchdown Royalist II", and at Reading, in the Shorthorn Association of Great Britain show he was awarded first prize for bulls born in April and May, 1949, characteristically the animal was named "Alveley Masterpiece 47th. His "Alveley Bright Boy 52nd" gained fourth place.

Both Billy and his wife, Mrs Joyce Williamson, are very popular in the Bridgnorth area and support many functions there. Mr. Simpson Williamson now lives at Kidderminster but he is still frequently seen in Bridgnorth wherein he did much public service before retirement.

The Old School Logbook. Tim White

The code of regulations for 1872 states that, "the principal teacher must make, at least once a week, in the log book, an entry which will specify progress and other facts concerning the school or its teachers, such as the dates of withdrawals, commencement of duty, cautions, illness etc., which may require to be referred to at a future time, or may otherwise deserve to be recorded. No reflections or opinions of a general character are to be entered in the log book."

The above statement is printed in the log book of Alveley Church of England School. The first log book still in existence commences in 1873 and finishes in 1897 and gives an intimate picture of school life 120 years ago. I have extracted and transcribed some of the entries for the first four years of this book. In compiling the article it occurred to me that the school may have moved further down the village but some things don't change even after 120 years. See if you agree.

For our next Transactions I hope to transcribe the next few years of the log book. Thanks to headteachers Mr Harrison and Mr Bevan and teachers H. Fleming and M. Oakley of Alveley County Primary School for their permission to borrow the log book.

1873

22 July. Mr John Hindley left this school on 27th June 1873. Richard Dudley, late master of the Eardington School, Bridgnorth, was elected temporary master and entered his duties on 19th July 1873.

28 July. The attendance better than last week.

31 July. R. Dudley leaves this school for the mastership of the ?? school, Nr. Oswestry.

15 Sept. John Hindley had charge of the school, the attendance has been low as the children are out gleaning.

22 Sept. The school was conducted by Mrs Downton, the sewing mistress.

29 Sept. John Hindley took charge of the school. The school has improved in numbers but many are still out gleaning.

13 Oct. The school still low. The parents promise to send the children but do not send them.

3 Nov. The Rev. C. Mackey, vicar of Alveley, gave a religious lesson on Wednesday and Friday in this week. Notice was given to the scholars on Friday the 7th. that during the short days the afternoon meeting would be a quarter of an hour earlier and the school would be closed so much sooner.

10 Nov. The last half hour each afternoon is devoted to singing by the whole school. The school was visited this week twice. The visitors heard the children sing.

17 Nov. There is an improvement in numbers. The children who have been absent so long have fallen back very much.

1874

2 Feb. The II and III standards have done their work very satisfactorily this week. The infants improve in singing. The elder ones are inclined to make too much noise in singing.

10 Feb. The school was inspected and examined by HM Inspector F. Myers. There were 75 present on the

day of the inspection.

H.M. Inspectors Report

“Considering that this is a first inspection the children have passed a very creditable examination. They are rather too talkative but the discipline is otherwise good. A double set of books should be used throughout the school. Cutting out and knitting should be taught. The infants are backward. The supply of desks is insufficient and more books should also be provided.”

12 Mar. The school was examined in Religious Knowledge by the Diocesan Inspector the Rev. L. Wheeler. The attendance was not good owing to the snow lying on the ground.

Copy of Report of Diocesan Inspector.

“This school is in a very fair condition with respect to Religious Knowledge and in some particulars has improved since last year. The repetition and writing out of the Catechism is still deficient in accuracy and more attention should be paid to the life of our Blessed Lord, especially in the first division !!”

T.L.Wheeler; Diocesan Inspector

16 Mar. Gave instruction in subtraction of money to SIII. The children in this standard are making fair progress in arithmetic.

24 Mar. There was a half holiday in the afternoon owing to a Confirmation being held in Alveley church.

25 Mar. John Hindley ceased to have charge of this school.

26 Mar. John Hindley had not definitely arranged to take another school until a short time before he left. Consequently the managers were not prepared to supply his place at once. The work of this school is carried on as usual Miss Kiddle, The Rev. C.W.Mackee and Mrs. Downton.

30 Mar. I find the children very backward in reading.

School Closed for Easter

22 Apr. The girls are very backward in needlework, they must work every afternoon.

1 May Instruction in singing was given.

15 Jun. E. Fox commenced duties as mistress of this school.

6 Jul. Attendance low due to fruit picking.

13 Jul. I notice an improvement in the writing and spelling of children in Standard II. School was visited by Rev C Mackey who heard the first class read from a new set of books.

3 Aug. The school was examined by the Rev Mackey who distributed prizes among the children.

7 Sep. George Clarke was appointed monitor instead of Edwin Lewis who had left the school for the Grammar school at Stourbridge. Attendance better.

19 Oct. On Tuesday the school was visited by two ladies who heard the children sing. The school was inspected on Friday by H.M. Inspector, the Rev. R. Temple.

2 Nov. The Rev. C.W.Mackey and Miss Riddle gave Religious instructions to the Upper Classes.

H.M. Inspectors Report.

“The late master left on March 25th. without due notice and with, what I consider, considerable abruptness. As far as I can judge from the present state of the school he was a bad teacher and neglected his duty. From March 25th. to June 15th. the school was taught by the Clergyman and his family as, in spite of every effort, a certificated teacher could not be got sooner.

The Mistress who is now in charge of the school has been in my district for six years and I have no doubt that she will bring this school into a good state. She has already made an excellent start. Under the circumstances of the past year I recommend the grant to be paid in full. The teaching of the infants needs attention.

30 Nov. There was a half holiday given on Thursday afternoon to prepare the school room for an entertainment in the evening.

14 Dec. There was no school on Wednesday owing to a heavy fall of snow the previous evening. Closed school on 18th. for the Christmas holidays.

1875

5 Apr. Reopened the school after the Easter holidays, attendance fair.

9 Apr. Miss Riddle gave Religious Instruction to the first class. George Clark left school.

12 Apr. School work went on as usual. Elizabeth Elcock, infants teacher, left school.

10 May. Attendance poor. Many of the children being kept at home to plant potatoes.

24 May. Many of the children are from school fruit picking.

9 Aug. Gave notice to the children that the school would be closed for a month for harvest holidays.

20 Dec. There was a half holiday on Tuesday on account of the Charity being given away in the school.

Also on Wednesday for the children's Xmas tree. Gave notice on Friday that the school would be closed for the Christmas holiday.

1876

17 Jan. School was visited by Miss Riddle and Miss Stockwood. The elder girls in the first class did needlework for prizes.

24 Jan. Attendance poor as several of the children are ill with measles.

20 Mar. E. Fox ceased duties as Mistress of this school.

4 Apr. A. Davies took charge of the school. 53 children were present. Rev. C.W. Mackey visited morning and afternoon, Miss Harley assisting.

5 Apr. Examined the school. Generally found them throughout very backward in arithmetic, the lower classes in things in general.

6 Apr. Continued examination of the school with a view to re-classification. Complained to Rev. C.W. Mackey of their backwardness generally and pointed out to him the difficulties we should have to contend with under the "New Code".

11 Apr. Had several complaints and had to caution the boys about their language and behaviour on the way to and from school.

25 Apr. Suspended several for continuous absence.

10 May. Owing to some complaints had occasion to caution the children about their conduct on their way to and from school.

11 May. Had to punish two boys for using bad language in the yard.

17 May. Boys very troublesome, kept them in during playtime.

19 May. A good attendance. Examined classes and subdivided them. Gave each to know his or her standard to work in. 5 admitted. Rev. Wm. Wilding of Arley called in afternoon and expressed himself pleased with the appearance of work at the school.

14 Jul. The Rev. C.W. Mackey visited and took a class. A Reynolds caught with school inkwells in her basket - cautioned.

8 Aug. School work as usual, gave notice of the party tomorrow at Coton Hall.

21 Sep. Had 1/2 hour practice in singing in morning instead of scripture lesson. Turned one child back, (France) too young.

26 Sep. Certificate regarding candidate.

"I have this day carefully examined John Hemingway Davies and find him in perfect health." W. Fereday
FRCS

Certificate of Managers.

“We certify that we believe John Hemingway Davies candidate for admission as Pupil Teacher in Alveley Church of England School in every way fitted by his moral character and by the character of his home for the work of Pupil Teacher.”

18 Oct. Copy of HM Inspectors Report

This little school is in good order. In attainments however it is still below the average having suffered during the present year from a change of teachers.

Arithmetic is weak throughout, writing is incorrect and badly formed among the elder children whose reading also needs improvement. The general intelligence of the scholars should be cultivated by consistent illustration of what they read by questioning. They sing fairly and their needlework is good. C.W.Mackey, manager.

The Ancestry of Michael J.Massey, Parish Clerk

This is a very brief history and some family trees of four local families who were resident in the area some 100 years ago, and specifically the relationship, at some point in time, of each of these families by marriage, and to myself, Michael J. Massey, Parish Clerk.

1. Cresswell

Richard Cresswell of Sidbury Hall was M.P. for Bridgnorth from 1710 - 1713 and was known as ‘Black Dick’. His relative John Cresswell came to live in the parish of Romsley about 1720 and his descendants became the occupiers of many properties in Romsley and Alveley. The Bowells (Bow Hills), Romsley Hall, Pool(e) Hall, Lower House (Dodds Meadow), and Grove House (Alveley). They were mainly farmers and towards the twentieth century there were many bachelors and spinsters, and so the line has albeit disappeared. The surviving Cresswell of this lineage being Vera Loxton (nee Cresswell) of Presteigne. The connection with the Massey family was that Emma Harley married Zephaniah Cresswell around 1880 and her sister Louisa married my grandfather, William Griffith Massey of Church House Farm, Alveley, around 1890.

2. Massey

Charles Massey, my great-grandfather, came from the other side of the river in the mid-nineteenth century to marry Emma Griffith. My research has taken me back to around 1600, but as yet it is not proven therefore I am only prepared to detail back as far as Benjamin Massey born in 1754 in Chetton, Shropshire. Charles Massey came to Alveley as a blacksmith but became the village postmaster, however he will probably be best remembered as a Methodist Local Preacher. A plaque to his memory is on the wall of the Alveley Methodist Church.

My grandfather, William Griffith Massey, a farmer and butcher, gave the land, now known as the Recreation Ground, to the parish shortly before he left the village to live in retirement at a small holding at Comberton, Kidderminster which is now part of the Spennels housing estate. The family continues to this day in Kidderminster with the latest generation being Jonathan Massey who is at present unmarried and living - working in Sussex.

3. Harley

Noticeably the link between most of these families. Again the line has died out and Benjamin Harley’s widow, Elsie, his second wife, died last year aged 94. It should be noted that several Alveley families appear on this family tree, such as Webb, Fellows (Turley Green), Link and Ellis. I remember especially (great) uncle Ben Harley. He only had one arm yet was a superb shot with a twelve bore and also a good fisherman. Ben was also the village undertaker and made the coffins in the sheds (still there) across the

road from his cottage at Allum Bridge, which was just opposite the turn to the Mill.

4. Clark

The family originally came to Alveley from Hopstone, Claverley, and were shopkeepers at Farfield House, Birds Green, and also kept the Squirrel and the Finger, (no longer a public house). Three of the children of John Instan Clark, Emmie, Minnie and Stephen, emigrated to New Zealand and were successful farmers, although none were married. George Clark was a butcher with a shop in Vicar St. Kidderminster, (where Curry's is now), and John Robert Clark, my grandfather, was a miller . The bakery and shop at Farfield House eventually closed just after his death in 1947. His son Philip, known as the 'Midnight Baker', died a short while ago in 1991. He was the last male in the Clark line. His sister, Joan Massey, my mother, is still alive.